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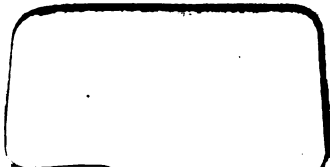
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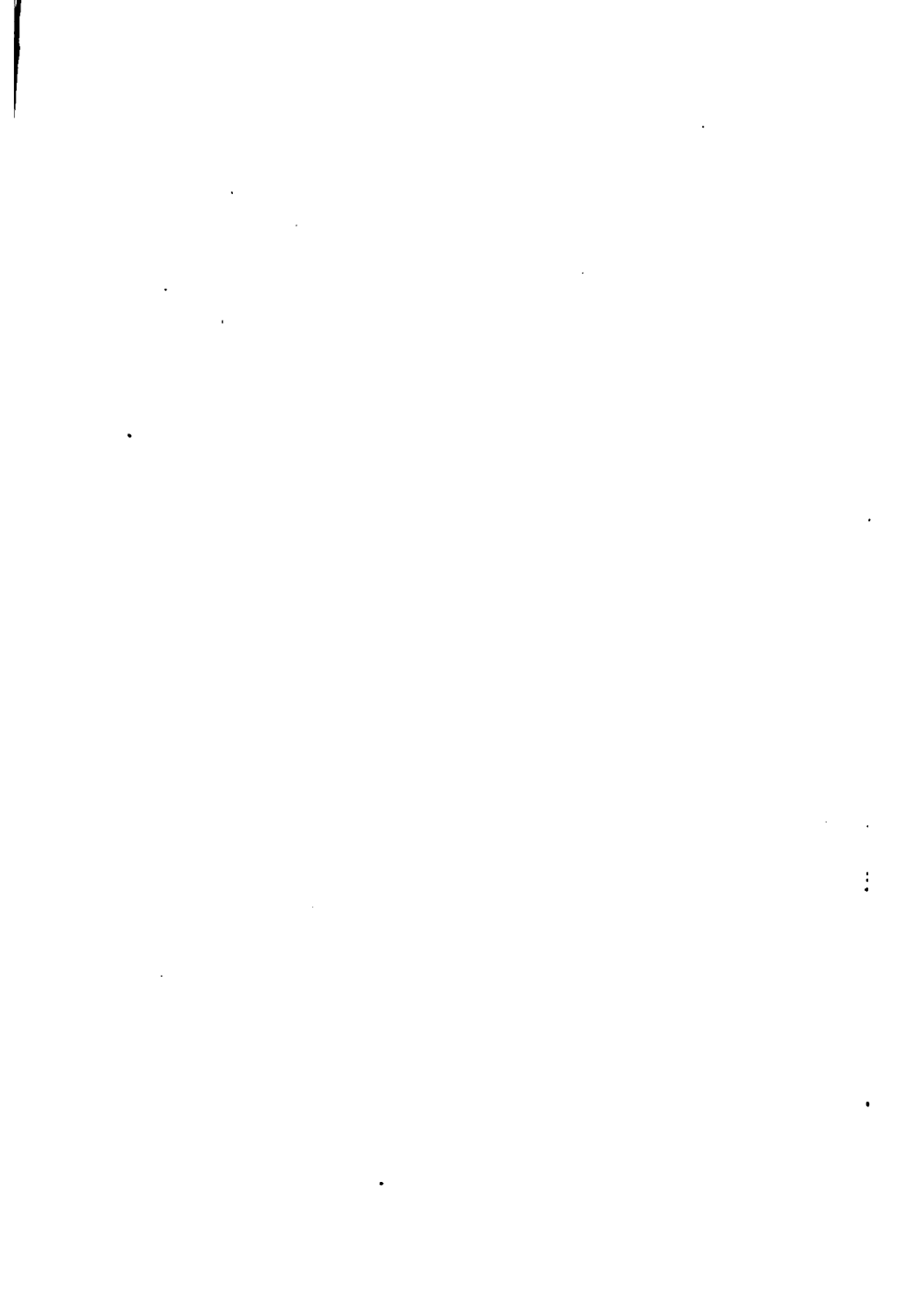




THE CATFISH



THE CATFISH



THE CATFISH

By

CHARLES MARRIOTT

AUTHOR OF

The Kiss of Helen, The Lapse of
Vivien Eady, Etc., Etc.

*"For the catfish is the demon of the deep,
and keeps things lively."*

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THE CATFISH

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CHAPTER I

QUITE early in life George Tracy discovered that if he were to be reasonably happy and prosperous he must pretend. It is often said that children live in a world of imagination. That may be true, but George Tracy's constant endeavor was to climb out of his own world of reality in order to gain precarious foothold in the world of make-believe created by other people. If he had known the word, he would have said that his difficulties were due to lack of imagination.

He first became conscious of his defect when he was between four and five. Before that, his life had been a matter of glimpses and snatches in which illusion and reality were too comfortably mingled to cause him any concern. It was connected with the city of Barstow. In it there was neither night nor day, but a confused twilight in which his father and elder brother walked godlike near the ceiling, while the room hummed and shook

to passing traffic. Other oddly assorted impressions of his life in Barstow were of a woman walking in the street in her nightgown, to the mingled scandal and delight of his sister and his nurse, of the lamplighter pushing up a haloed star at him from below, of a shop where they cut your hair in one room and sold — or, he was persuaded, gave away — toys in another as compensation for the loss of your ears, and of himself eating enormous gooseberries out of a paper bag. From guarded allusions in later years he was led to believe that his life in Barstow had been rather shameful.

The basis of reality began for him between sleeping and waking on a soft, warm, wet night in autumn. It was composed of the rushing of a river, sudden shouts, moving lights, the smell of harness and the taste of rain as, muffled to the ears, he sat between his father's and mother's legs on the jolting floor of something he knew to be called a "trap". He understood that they had nearly driven into the river, which, from its immediate and continued importance in the scheme of reality, might have been the river of life. Until, rounding a high wall in the dark, as if a door had been suddenly opened upon reality, he felt and heard the rush of wind and water, he had not fully awakened to

a personal existence. He dimly remembered having been got out of bed and dressed in a strange house, but all that belonged to Barstow, and, relatively, to dreamland.

The next thing he remembered was waking in his sister's bed in a bare and immensely high room flooded with yellow sunlight. Then followed exploration, in his nightshirt, of one high, bare, yellow room after another, furnished principally with bell-wires, long passages with stairs up and down at unexpected intervals, a flagged hall, and a deliciously cool and queer-smelling place, with slate slabs along the whitewashed walls, where the light came down green and trembling through leaves and wire netting. This place he understood to be a dairy, and the cave at one end, where his courage failed, was a wine-cellar.

Then for days, weeks, months, or it might have been a year, life was too crowded for definite impressions. Either at the time or later, George learned that the reason of the move from Barstow, which for him had all the character of an awakening into life, was that his father had been made partner in the bank he had previously served, and consequently it seemed, was become a country gentleman. In course of time George had it impressed upon him

that the social change was less a rise than a reinstatement after long years of exile from a proper sphere; a sphere the nature of which was not inaptly indicated to George's mind by the fact that his father was able to drive a trap in the dark; but at the moment he was only conscious of the change. The circumstance that fixed it in his mind was being taught by his sister to say "chimney" instead of "chimbley". In Barstow he had said "chimbley" unreprieved; and this, combined with his other memories and their discouragement by his family, went to create the impression, which deepened from this time onward, that life in Barstow had been rather shameful.

The new house was called Bourneside. To George the name was inevitable; for the brook, or "bourne"—playful diminutives for what in the scheme of reality persisted a river—formed one long boundary of the estate and supplied for him its moral and material atmosphere. The other long boundary was formed by the road from Barstow, which, following a high wall, kinked suddenly at a right angle to cut off Bourneside and accompany the river. It was this conspiracy between road and river, aided by a drinking-place for horses, that had nearly betrayed George's father on the

night of their arrival. You entered Bourneside through double gates into a yard if driving, through a Gothic door in the high ivied wall that guarded the front lawn, if on foot, from the short lap of road in its quick turn to the river. At the far end of the estate a succession of fields, which took the names of their owners, covered the widening interval between road and river half-way to Barstow.

George's gradual apprehension of the house and its environment began from the nursery, which was at the very top — it became significant to his mind that there had not been a nursery in Barstow — and reached by a thousand stairs. His estimate of their number was not shaken by cold calculation of windows from the lawn, which told him that the house had only three stories — not counting the dairy. The very word "story" suggested a moving tale, and the discrepancy between outside and inside only confirmed a sense of mystery in which "landing" became literally significant of a momentary respite from perilous and toilsome goings up and down. He thought of the landings, first and top, but particularly top, as clear-lit and abiding in a world of shadows and change. From them the stairs depended in a manner that was purely

fortuitous. At any moment the stairs might play him a dirty trick; might change their direction between going up and coming down, stretch interminably, trip him up, or leave off suddenly with him hanging in space. Then there were half-landings at the turns; frail rafts of security, with no escape from sudden panic into the comfort of rooms. George was quite a big boy before he convinced himself that there was not a story, unsuspected by his elders or denied by them, over the nursery. Far down in his bedroom on windy nights he heard Things romping or quarreling there, and he discovered it in dreams.

The nursery had three windows overlooking the front lawn. The road, vexatiously hidden by the high wall, came into view where it reached the river, and from thence onward they were visible, though obscured by trees. At the junction of road and river, in line with the Gothic door, the drinking-place for horses was flanked and explained by a smithy. Partly screened, he surmised deliberately, by a broad sycamore that overhung the Gothic door, the smithy became for George the symbol of the world with its delights and dangers, from the knowledge of which his elders would fain have secured him. It was a concentration of all

that went on upon the hidden highway of life. When later he read Longfellow and came upon the words, "Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing," this opinion was confirmed. From language that came up to him from the smithy when a wheel was being "bonded" in a circle of fire and steam, he supposed that what went on upon the hidden highway of life was mostly bad, and he conceded the wisdom of his elders while secretly rejoicing over its only partial success. The left-hand window of the nursery, which commanded the smithy, was always a more or less discouraged enjoyment.

The road, for one great moment plainly visible, shelved to the drinking-place, and this constant reminder of peril escaped on the night of arrival was the cause of George's extreme delight. The Bourne was hill-fed and badly channeled, and at heavy rains it rose with amazing rapidity. The drinking-place was one of its earliest doors to freedom, and from his nursery windows George had the periodical joy of a smithy quenched, and horses all but swimming. Time after time he woke to the same formula—"The flood's out!"—shouted through the house by the earliest stir; and one winter evening on setting out for some village entertainment, he had the supreme thrill of water lapping the stone

step from the Gothic door into the road. The loss of the entertainment was nothing to the sense of the water's having risen silently in the dark while they tea-ed. In his heart he knew that their escape on arrival was not forgotten by the Bourne, and years later he came to Poseidon as an old enemy.

On the other side of the Bourne the ground rose rapidly through trees to be crowned by a long bel-fried building, now a farm, which at an early age George understood to be Elizabethan. But the sloping field below had for him other than historical importance. It was the scene of the weekly archery meeting. From the conversation of his elders he gathered that archery meeting was the real test of their only partial emergence from the stain of Barstow. To belong to the Archery Club, which was captained by the duchess, was to belong to the county. The Tracys did not belong. Young as he was, George felt that his father bore their fate with indifference, his obvious ambition being the country and not the county gentleman, and his mother with dignity enhanced by regret; but his brother Walter and his sister Amelia, though not yet of an age to suffer from the distinction, openly resented it. To them the shining targets of red, white, blue and gold, though sources of in-

terest, were symbols of disgusting and unreasonable pride. A banker, they said, was as good as the solicitor whose daughter had achieved the county and the club by marriage, and everybody knew that in his youth, in another county, father had hunted. George, though not pretending to an opinion, was fiercely loyal, and with Walter and Amelia he was torn between malicious joy and disappointment when rain prevented archery. Whether in fact or fancy it often did, and "Archery Day" became proverbial as a bad choice for excursions. For a long time George reckoned his week: "Sunday, Monday, Archery Day—"

From the Archery Field, which had the further distinction of being the occasional scene of flower shows and school treats—so that it kept up its historical association by remaining a tented field—high ground followed the tree-veiled retiring of road and river to end on the right, which was also the east, in a fir-wooded brow that hid the Camp. A dozen circumstances, the footprints of old Rome, the fact that the church lay in that direction, and the first appearance of light there, conspired to make the fir-wood for George the very harp of dawn. On the memorable occasions when he was up at sunrise he was convinced that music

as well as light proceeded from between the straight stems of the fir-trees; golden music of the kind that was summed up for him in the word "Psalm." So filled was his life with the dayspring mystery of the hidden Camp, the frank pageantry of the tented field, and the worldly joys — the sights, the sounds and not less the smells — of the smithy, that he was a big boy before he recognized that, looking north-east, except at early morning, his nursery received no single ray of direct sunlight. He had to out-grow childhood before he missed the sun.

Behind the smithy the river disappeared to pass under an ascending fork of the road and embrace Bourneside. As indicated by the menace of the flood, the house itself lay low; indeed, from the road, it always seemed to George to be cowering behind its ivied wall — an effect increased by the absence of sunlight from its own ivied front and long, unbroken slate roof sloping at either end; but all its grounds ascended from the river. Their divisions, though not large, were in George's mind ennobled by capitals, and they each had a distinctive atmosphere. Thus, commanded by the nursery windows, was the Lawn, associated with the coming and going of visitors, polite conversation, croquet, and picking-up-leaves as a half-respite from lessons.

Since everything done on the Lawn must be done in the company or under the eyes of elders, it had for George the eternal atmosphere of Sunday afternoon, relieved, however, by the secret knowledge of a sweetbrier against the wall and a climbing-place in the northeast corner to a watch-tower where, concealed by a barberry, whose wood was bright yellow when you broke and peeled it, and whose coral and forbidden fruit was exquisitely sharp, you commanded the road.

To the left, invisible from the nursery and plunging into a shrubbery, was the Side Lawn. This was a natural escape from elders, the scene of more sensible games, such as Pirates and Crusades, and it was made wistful and disturbing, you didn't know why, by the decline of day when birds left their sentences unfinished and life became an unanswered question. The Side Lawn, for all its practical advantages, was always associated in George's mind with a hollow feeling in his stomach, sanctified by the smell of spiræa.

From the Side Lawn you crept, if unobserved, into the Court, a flagged way round the back and kitchen sides of the house. At the back were an illicit entrance, the windows, fruitful by arrangement, of the pantry and storeroom and

the hardly less absorbing window of the laundry. Also, it was from here that you nipped up the steps into the Orchard. On the kitchen side the Court broadened and you stepped boldly, as one open to question but having legitimate business, such as a drink of water or to know the time.

Once here, you dawdled in the sun until remembered and sent away. There was not only the warm wide friendliness of the kitchen window, conditioned, it is true, by the temper of cook, but you were already in touch with the masculine politics of the Yard, and within darting reach of the coach-house, the stable, the hay-loft — with its ladder and chaff-cutter — the coal-house, the workshop, and best of all, the back door into the road. The possibilities of the back door could not be better summed up than in Walter's boast that from it he had once seen two men fighting.

From the Yard, the Garden was monastically secluded by a wall with a door in it. The door was generally kept locked, but you were passed through it on parole. The Garden was, or seemed, immensely long, and it was high-walled on every side. Highest, where it marched with the Orchard, and received the full beat of sun. Here were the strawberry-beds, protected less by your honor

than by the awful gaze of those rare fruits, peaches, nectarines and apricots, which even when halved upon your plate on Sunday were eaten with a sense of sacrilege. For a third of its length the wall was given up to vines under glass, and beyond, there was a door into the Orchard — convenient when virtue had failed. Because at the top of the Garden such parvenus as plums and greengages took their chance of your morality, and in other places there were occasions for the conviction of sin which inevitably followed upon such nice problems as whether a pear had fallen or been made to fall. With regard to the mere populace of currants and gooseberries under the wall that divided the Garden from the road, parole was understood to be reasonably elastic, and to include a privilege, if not a duty, toward common boys who climbed. Clods were condoned, but stones forbidden, and a door permitted sudden excursions with sticks if the force behind you justified pursuit.

For George, the risks of the Garden were chiefly those of being committed by Walter and Amelia against sneaking. He was not a greedy boy, and with so much for the eye, nose and ear, he was apt to forget the pleasures of taste, though he was by no means above them. His happiest moments

in the Garden were spent before breakfast, in what Walter described as a "stuck pig" attitude before a tangle of color, scent and sound in which roses, lilies, carnations, lavender and rosemary were separate thrills, rather than concrete realities. He had always, however, a distinct impression of the bush of Cape heath, known to him as "bees'-rattle", which he believed not only to attract, but to breed the droning perils to his bare legs from behind.

His more sharable emotions were connected with the Orchard. The aristocracy of the fruit-bearing world being safely walled in the Garden, the Orchard was more or less free at all hours of liberty, and it was the usual playground when you didn't go-out-for-a-walk. Certain trees, the Quarrenders, for example, whose offspring bit rosy through glossy crimson, and the unnamed variety known as the "cricket-tree"—from the betrayals of autumn, when good stumps as well as common sticks were found lodged in the branches—were nominally reserved for dessert; but the rest were at a reasonable discretion, quite humorously determined by Black Draught. Most of them were of the vulgar sort, which dropped their striped millions for cider. In any case it was not the apples, nor yet the mixed emotions of cricket and

other games, which endeared the Orchard to George, but the fact that it sloped to the river. Here he actually came in touch with the fundamental reason of Bourneside, of which all its other properties were but gloss and commentary.

He was quick to discover that for other people it was the other way about, and he envied them their freedom of thought. To Walter, for example, the Bourne was running water, brown in color and not over-clear, to be paddled in, bathed in, fished in — mainly for eels — to be dammed, diverted and treated generally as a convenience. Nothing gave George a stronger sense of Walter's superiority than the light-hearted way in which he patronized the Bourne. In this patronage George bore, under direction, a humble part, but always with the hollow feeling in his stomach which at that age represented emotion. Rather than betray the real nature of his feelings, he was content to be called a funk. In his heart he knew that he was a funk — but he was not afraid of being drowned. He was not afraid of anything that he could give a name to, but it was summed up in a sound.

You heard it even in the Orchard, but in order to come under its full influence, you had to climb a loose wall into the lower of the two fields that

completed the Bournside estate. Screened by a light hedge, the Bourne accompanied the field for some distance, to be lost presently behind a rising bank. At the far corner, the field ran down suddenly to a gap, and there was the Waterfall.

The physical explanation of the Waterfall was simple enough. A few hundred yards above, the Bourne was joined by a tributary coming from a nearly opposite direction. The wedded streams advanced broadly and smoothly to an edge, keen and straight as the edge of a razor, and turned over glassily to drop twenty feet or so in thunder. The water came down perfectly straight, with only a transient quiver, like the shaking of spears. In the middle it broke upon a rock, but on either side made its own deep furrow in the water below, which rolled up and over like dragons, to foam away at a sharp turn and slide swiftly and darkly, with yellow breaking bubbles to betray the speed of it, under a bridge. Beyond, the note of the Waterfall was taken up in servile human imitation by a mill. Even in childhood, the mild boom and quake of a mill struck George as ridiculously old-womanish.

Thrilling as it was to the eye in its keen twinkling edge, glassy turn, clean drop, fat upward roll from

below and swift stealthy retreat, it was the voice of the Waterfall that shook George to the center. It became the fundamental bass of life. Heard or unheard, blown to him heavily as he played in the Orchard, or faintly as they lay abed, remembered or forgotten, it was never out of his mind. He lived less upon the banks than upon the sound of the Bourne. Just as the smithy, the first point in his personal relations with the Bourne, represented the vision of life in its brisk activities and human joys and sorrows, so the Waterfall, at the farthest end, embodied the deeps and mysteries of which human life is only the surface-play. In the precarious make-believe he shared with other people, George was prepared to make all sorts of comparisons to the sound of the Waterfall: to him it said very plainly, "Doom!"

CHAPTER II

THOUGH deeply based in the sound of "Doom!" George's life at Bourneside was far from unhappy. For all its disturbing undercurrent, it was the constant effort to climb out of it that bothered him. Not that the game of make-believe was unpleasant in itself, but that the rules were so hard to understand. They seemed to be purely arbitrary; they bore no relation to life as he felt it, or even to each other. Meals, lessons, cricket, going-to-church, polite conversation with elders — each turn of the game was independent of all the rest and presented its own opportunities for coming to grief. Meals, for example, were only remotely connected with the satisfaction of hunger. That was the simplest affair, but, unfortunately, you didn't get down when it was accomplished. In fact, meals properly only began when you had eaten all you wanted, and for a long time George associated the word with the horrid sound of food in a dry mouth — a condition that betrayed you into the crime of drinking-with-your-

mouth-full. It is hardly too much to say that George's earlier life was darkened by meals.

Lessons, again, were so obscurely connected with the acquisition of knowledge that they seemed to have been invented for an exactly opposite reason. Instead of opening your mind to its fullest reach, you had to make it small and gritty in order to compass them. They were difficult by what they excluded. They gave you the word "Roman", but denied you all that glamor of the clanking sentinel gazing Severnward through the fir-wood from the mound of the Camp, which would have made the word comprehensible and fertile. As presented at lessons, it was a hard and dry little thing like a parched pea, which rolled about in the sensitive folds of your memory in unrelated company with dates. You were lucky if you cornered them together on demand. It puzzled George that while his elders, at meals or in conversation with visitors, would speak of the Camp as Roman — even mentioning that coins and pottery had been found there — he was not allowed to talk about the Camp at lessons. Naturally he concluded that meals, lessons and polite conversation were separate turns in an elaborate game of make-believe.

In the matter of lessons, however, independent

reading soon came to his aid. Though lessons were not for the acquisition of knowledge, knowledge acquired by whatever means could be applied to them with advantageous results. Not only knowledge, but the discouraged faculties connected with the life of reality, such as that of dreaming. Arithmetic as done by rules and tables was a hopeless muddle, but when you shut your eyes and saw the figures perform their complicated evolutions, it cleared up wonderfully. With no object in these illegitimate approaches but self-protection, George presently heard that he was "getting on" at lessons. He was even spoken of as "rather clever". He was overcome with shame at the result of his duplicity. With fear also. Sooner or later there must be an awful exposure; he would be forced to betray the basis of his fancied "cleverness". He knew the real thing. It was embodied in a little girl of his acquaintance of whom it was said: "She knows all her tables and all her dates."

Walter and Amelia, with whom, for a short time, he shared the rule of Miss Arnold, were not clever, but they played the game. They used no illegitimate approaches to lessons from below; never found the fact they wanted in memories of

Andersen or dreamed their sums to a triumphant conclusion. Right or wrong, they did everything by the rules. If wrong, they took their punishment, being kept in, or even rapped over the knuckles with the ruler, tearfully, maybe, but upstanding. When George was wrong, he was generally harrassed by the conviction that by some queer light of reality he was right. He could not be content to abide and suffer by rules that he did not understand. It was not the punishment he wept under, but the sense of being misguided by knowledge that never could conform to the rules.

Walter and Amelia were not clever, but they understood, if they did not always remember, the rules. For them "hist'ry was hist'ry, and jography, jography"; there was no illicit connection between the two, or of both with the Camp and the Archery Field — let alone the perilous association of "hist'ry" with tales and "jography" with earthquakes. But it was less their power of keeping these and other branches of knowledge pure and unmixed that George envied his elder brother and sister than the extraordinary faculty they seemed to share with their elders of linking them up with meals, orthodox games, and — on the part of their elders — business and politics,

and other difficult and unrelated exercises, as parts of a consistent and adequate whole. They might stumble in this region, but they never seemed to slip through into another world — a world of solid though enchanted ground, where dawn harped in the fir-wood, Things romped in an unexplained attic, and the Waterfall thundered “Doom!”; a world where you moved easily, though humbly, and often afraid. Walter and Amelia were sometimes afraid, but always of consequences — which were the least part of his concern. In the matter of bulls, it was the actual goring and trampling they feared. George would not have welcomed these experiences, but what he really dreaded was the real or imaginary disposition to inflict them on the part of an animal that looked so noble and wise, and, moreover, could not communicate its intentions in articulate language. If a bull could have spoken, he would have dared its horns and hoofs with a comparatively light heart. As it was, he could not distinguish his fear of bulls and other large animals from his fear of God; in each case fear was equally mixed up with love and reverence.

Even in manhood he could not quite believe that horned cattle and big dogs were not nobler

and wiser than he was—though perhaps not so clever. At seven years old, he never doubted the fact, though he found it convenient to pretend otherwise. The difference between his and Walter's and Amelia's fears was best illustrated by their respective attitudes to thunder and lightning. They feared the lightning; he the thunder. In vain they argued that lightning killed, while thunder was only a noise. Intellectually he assented, but in his heart he knew that thunder was the awfuller phenomenon. With this topsyturvy conception of the universe it was not surprising that in moments of actual danger he often showed unexpected courage and coolness. Then he was called brave. He hated to be called brave as he hated to be called clever; not out of modesty, but because he knew that in that particular instance the danger, as the difficulty, had not existed for him. They came a lot earlier. Brave people were they who could mock at thunder, walk unmoved through the lowering silence of bulls, or treat the Bourne as a convenience.

As he grew up and extended his circle of acquaintances, he made his own inferiority the standard of judgment. He could not help seeing that, though contemptible, he was not quite alone.

Other people, in varying degrees, betrayed the same tendency to lose foothold in the difficult world of make-believe — which he always pictured as a complicated scaffolding — and fall through to the solid ground of reality. Naturally he despised them — as linked with him by a common shame. His heroes were all people who were perfectly at home in the world of make-believe; imaginative people, he would have called them, if he had been familiar with the word. His father and Walter in particular.

He did not see very much of his father, who drove into Barstow every morning and returned only in time for dinner, but what he saw was all heroic. To begin with, his father could ride, drive and shoot without the least appearance of doing anything romantic. He preferred newspapers to books, and meat to pudding. He smoked pipes and drank beer and wine as if he liked them. From conversation George understood that, since his elevation to partnership, his father had set the business on its legs; and he pictured him doing it with his bare hands, as he had seen the men putting up trestle-tables in the Archery Field for school treats.

Of his father's forthright methods with nature

he had the evidence of his own eyes on Sundays. His father was a passionate gardener, with no more respect for the natural divisions of the earth than he had for the susceptibilities of his neighbors. He would have down a wall or shift an asparagus-bed as soon as look at it. George thought of him as always with a pruning-knife in his hand, but that his energies were not purely destructive he knew from the extraordinary richness of their table in fruit and vegetables, as well as from the reputation the Garden presently acquired. But the destructive energies most impressed him. There was the removal of the mulberry-tree. Enormous, in the midst of the Garden, it was for George the very symbol of permanence; a Tree Ygdrasil, whose roots encompassed the world and whose branches were a kingdom. Moreover, George was very fond of its fruit. Their strange flavor, so mellow and yet so sharp, released pictures in his brain of Turks and Venetians and the Great Wall of China, so that he instinctively closed his eyes whenever he swallowed a mulberry. In autumn, new sacks were spread on the grass plot which surrounded the great tree to catch the fruit; and to the end of his life George could not look at new sacks without seeing them stained with mulberry-juice.

One Sunday George observed his father walking round and round the tree, thoughtfully stroking his beard. Between the thrill that every child feels at the prospect of change, regret and awe, he heard him say that the tree robbed the Garden of more than its value. The very next day a small army of men descended upon the tree with pickaxes and shovels, and it was as if the abyss had been opened. In a morning the symbol of permanence had ceased to exist at a word from his father, whose week-day viceroy in the Garden, Dicky Dando, wrung his hands over the operations — thus giving the measure of their audacity. But George had heard his father speak of Dicky as “an old fool”.

Outside the Garden George was most impressed by the things his father did not do. He did not go to church. Nor did he ever pay visits, though people came to him. Young as he was, George felt the weight of this passivity, and he surmised that his father must have some natural authority denied to other men. He did not know what it was, but he observed that his father might have been a more important local figure than he chose to be. At one time George supposed that his father's power was due to his being a banker and so controlling all the money in the world; but observing

that his principal partner, Mr. Burroughs, was obviously a man of straw, he concluded that there must be some other reason. Whatever it was, it resulted in other people making advances to which his father did not respond. From stray hints George was led to believe that his mother sometimes gently complained at the sacrifice of social advantages; and he gathered that what acquaintances she made were at the risk of his father's displeasure. Visitors often gave George the impression of being anxious to repair a mistake.

To himself, his father was kind though indulgent. Evidently he recognized that George was a failure in the world of affairs. He did not expect from him the intelligence, courage and bodily prowess that he exacted from Walter. Whenever George tried to attract his father's attention to some hard-won accomplishment in these phases of activity, his father good-humoredly turned the conversation upon books. This, though galling, was inevitable, and could be borne so long as his father did not suspect, as he evidently did not, his real inferiority — which included and explained his increasing proficiency at lessons.

With his mother it was different. Almost as soon as he became aware of himself George sus-

pected that she understood him, and that she gloated secretly over his inferiority. The reason, he surmised, was that she herself made a comparatively poor job of the life of make-believe. He observed that she had not his father's and brother's glorious freedom with words; that, like himself, she was often bothered by the weight of meaning that hung to them. He loved his mother, of course, but he resented her tendency to give him away. He did not mind being called a "duffer", "silly", or even a "coward", but he did mind the basis of the weaknesses indicated being exposed. His mother sometimes tried to smooth over his natural differences with Miss Arnold, and he knew that she repeated his most unguarded sayings to his father. Consequently, he kept his mother at a little distance — a distance that she was always trying in some crafty way to diminish.

On summer evenings she would call him to sit with her on the Side Lawn, thus catching him when the decline of day, the unfinished remarks of birds and the smell of spiræa brought him nearest to his basis of reality. Or, again on summer evenings, she would walk with him at the top end of the Garden, behind the raspberry-canes, in full hearing of the Waterfall. In one corner of this end of the

Garden there was a small, dark, irregular building, sham Gothic in style and believed by George to be of great age, now used as a tool-house and for growing mushrooms and forcing sea-kale. This, with the shadow of the wall and the sound of the Waterfall, gave to the place a peculiar solemnity.

On these occasions George's mother wore a broad hat and a red cloak that he never remembered her to wear at any other time. With him she paced up and down the walk, holding her head with unusual dignity and often smiling. It seemed to him as if she moved to unheard music and he concluded that, inspired by the surroundings, she must be playing some foolish game such as he often indulged in when let alone. He was sympathetic, but on guard; and after a few turns he generally began to talk rather loudly about matters connected with the life of make-believe; how many runs he had made at cricket, or how the apples were coming on. His mother would say: "Yes, yes," absently. All the time he knew that he was wanting to talk about real things, that he was on the edge of something, so to speak, incriminating; but he could not have said what it was he wanted to say, and so the walk always gave him a queer mixture of emotions.

But it was in church that he found his mother most disturbing. Even without her, church was one of his most trying experiences, for it was there that the life of reality and the life of make-believe came to close quarters. There only needed a touch to make them one, but since the touch was wanting, you had to be on guard all the time. George liked being in church; he loved the organ and the colored windows — they sat under the Resurrection — but he hated going-to-church; that was the nearest he could get to describing his conflicting emotions. If he could have crept in quietly in his every-day clothes and hidden behind the font, he would have been quite happy.

What he dreaded most of all was blushing. He never knew when it would happen; some trick of the organ, some word in the lessons or even in the sermon would get home upon him as he sat staring unguardedly at the east window, and his cheeks would flame. With his mother beside him he sat in a prickle of apprehension. She might not blush, but he could feel her tremble, and he was constantly afraid that she would take hold of his hand. If she had he would have blubbered outright. One dreadful day his mother disgraced him utterly. At the words of the lesson: "For I tell you that

the troubles and trials of this mortal life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us," she suddenly burst out crying. George's conviction that her crying had something to do with his father's not going to church did not make him any more lenient in his judgment of her weakness. His wisdom in keeping her at a distance was confirmed.

The other members of the family gave him no trouble. Walter, who was five years older than he, was already a man of the world. He could ride and drive, swim and skate; and if he could not shoot, he had more than once let off a gun. Admiring him, George felt perfectly safe in his good-natured contempt. Walter suspected nothing more than that he was a duffer at games. Every word of praise from Walter was treasured by George, who valued success only in that which belonged to the world of affairs. It was Walter who, without suspecting the reason, made him feel the indignity of comparative quickness at lessons. When, at the age of twelve, Walter was emancipated from the rule of Miss Arnold and began to attend a day-school, he grandly gave George his paint-box as a symbol of infancy for which he had no further use.

Amelia, two years older than George, was a nonentity; a Tomlinson — if he had known the allusion. She belonged to the half-world between affairs and reality. She would play cricket as if she liked it, but, if Walter were not there, she would pretend to sensible games such as Pirates, Crusaders and the Round Table. If George despised and distrusted those who shared his weakness, he could not away with those who affected it. People who went out of their way to claim an inferiority they were not born to were beneath contempt. For want of a better, George made use of Amelia in sensible games, but he was always having to coach her. In the world of reality she was blind and deaf. Her games with dolls were feeble in the extreme; they were nothing more than grotesque imitations of the world of affairs. Sure sign of the pretender in the world of reality, Amelia invented things; ghosts on the stairs — as if the stairs were not enough — and a personality for the Bourne. The Bourne a person! But being meek and long-haired, she made a good passive object in real games; as Andromeda, or the captive Paleface Maiden. She could wail with conviction as the monster or the flames drew nearer and nearer.

Miss Arnold, though sometimes unfair, was

likable. She never pretended to, nor suspected, any reality outside the game of discipline tempered by ritualistic recreations such as picking-wild-flowers or tea-in-the-hay-field. An engaging trait was her abject admiration for George's father. George doubted if the admiration were valued at its proper worth; he once overheard his father mimicking Miss Arnold to his mother.

The rest of the household — the inconstant trio of maids, Dicky Dando, who quaked and murmured under the responsibility of the Garden, and William, who ruled the Yard — were valued according to their talents and amenability to coaxing. On the whole William was the most important. His concerns — the horse, guns, rat-traps and tools generally — were further removed than Dicky's from the world with which George was instinctively familiar. Dicky was almost a native of George's world. He didn't like the look of the weather, and had other apprehensions. George was afraid sometimes that Dicky understood him. Possibly that was why his father had called him "an old fool".

William was much younger than Dicky and had things more his own way. Besides, Walter thought more of him. He had the extraordinary distinction of living on the Camp, his business took

him often to the smithy, and he was intimately connected with the politics of the Back Door. Most of George's information about the great world came through William and the Back Door. On winter evenings he had the sense that the business of the nation was being settled there.

Dicky Dando was utterly useless as a channel of information about the great world. For one thing, he lived almost on the estate, across the road in a cottage, the Garden of which was visible from the nursery windows. The blacksmith lived next door to him, and George could not help feeling that Dicky was unworthy of his privilege. He seemed to take no interest in the world, and on the other hand, his connection with the deeps and mysteries that lay below the surface of life was rendered sterile by his extraordinary stupidity. He and George had always a different explanation of natural phenomena. Besides mismanaging the Garden, Dicky milked the cow that lived in the Orchard, fed the fowls, and made the butter. He did the last in a tall churn in the back kitchen, and his connection with mystery was impressed upon George by the spectacle of him "dap-dapping" like a man bedeviled, and occasionally stopping to wipe his brow and mutter because the butter wouldn't

“come”. George was persuaded that he muttered charms. Then there was the occult relation between cream and thunder. To sum up the inferiority of Dicky to William, while the latter rightly thought much of “Mas’r Walter”, Dicky undoubtedly preferred George. Worst of all, perhaps, he was in the habit of calling him “a little scholar.”

This, with its implications, was becoming more and more the cloud upon George’s future. It was understood that Walter was to follow his father into the bank, but George had the uneasy feeling that his parents had already given him up as hopeless for such a natural promotion; his father in good-natured despair, his mother with secret approval. His pretending was of no avail. He was being relegated to women, to such as Dicky Dando, and to the things that could be done easily. As yet, nothing definite had been said to indicate his future fate, but one Sunday at dessert, when they were talking about the respective merits of different professions, his father said laughingly as he cracked a nut:

“Oh, George will have to be a parson, or a schoolmaster, or an artist, or something of that sort.”

George knew that the first must be a joke, for the simple reason that he was not good enough. About a schoolmaster he didn’t know — though Walter’s

accounts of Mr. Shipway were not encouraging; but the idea of being an artist presented certain attractions — though he had not thought of it before. He drew and painted, but only for practical purposes, to remember things by, and he did not suppose that an artist was concerned with remembering. He thought of an artist as making plain the mysteries.

Within the next few days it came to his ears that there was an artist in the neighborhood. Discreet inquiries only brought the information that the artist had drawn and painted certain familiar spots. No member of the household had seen him actually at work, and when George found an opportunity to visit some of the scenes of his alleged labors they did not look any different. He had expected to find them looking tired, as if robbed of their secrets. Then one morning George heard from Dicky Dando that the artist was painting the Waterfall.

With a sense of intruding upon awful rites, he slipped through the Orchard and crossed the lower field, keeping close to the hedge. When he came to the gap he lay down on his stomach and crawled. Yes, the artist was there. His appearance was disappointing. He was dressed rather absurdly in a

white coat and a broad-brimmed gray hat, and he looked common. He sat on a stool before an easel with a bottle of beer beside him — for it was just dinner-time. The boy who had brought the beer stood by the water with a bent stick, pretending to fish, and the artist was painting him. This in itself struck George as foolish. Anybody could see that no fish lived below that falling thunder. Green water-snakes with jeweled eyes and golden crowns upon their heads were a different matter. The artist held his head on one side in a self-satisfied way and whistled while he painted. Presently the boy caught sight of George and grinned. The artist looked round and said: "Well, young shaver?"

Unafraid now, George drew near and watched him at work. No wonder the other places showed no sign of his labors. This man could not have taken away the secret of a cabbage. He had made the Waterfall as tame as a teapot, all curly where it should have been straight, and absurdly festooned with leaning trees. Trying to conceal his disappointment, George said nothing, and the artist said: "Well, wouldn't you like to be an artist?" George said emphatically, "No."

He knew that with a little practise he could have done better. He could at least have suggested the

straight fall of the water, the deep furrow and the fat upward roll. When he went home to dinner he said something of the sort and was reproved for boasting. Years later, when he saw a Chinese painting of a waterfall in the British Museum he knew that he had been right. At the time he decided that nothing would induce him to become an artist, and when he gathered from the conversation of his elders that an artist was regarded as a feeble unpractical sort of person, he cordially agreed.

Failing some natural employment of manhood, such as the bank, or the sea, or soldiering, or exploring, or even driving an engine, George had as yet no definite idea of what he wanted to be. His great need at present was to know. He read everything that came in his way. He loved Andersen and *Hiawatha* and *Tales of the Round Table* for the strange feelings they gave him and the beautiful pictures they made him see; but on the whole he preferred facts to fairy tales. If you got the facts you could do all the rest, and most fairy tales struck him as missing the real wonder of the world in an attempt to improve upon it—very much as Amelia missed the real meaning of the stairs, or the artist that of the Waterfall. How things were done was an absorbing interest, and

for that reason *The Swiss Family Robinson* was put before *Robinson Crusoe*.

It was probably the birthday gifts of a tool-box and what was called a "chemical chest" that turned George's attention in a direction that might be called scientific. The way things worked was a never-ending delight to him, and he had an instinctive sense of mechanics. Presently it was said: "George will be an inventor." He knew, though he could not have explained why, that it was not true. He had no desire to invent things, nor had he the craftsman's joy in the actual use of tools; what he wanted was to realize the way things worked. He understood the principle of the steam-engine in a flash; the steam wanted to get out, and all the rest followed as a matter of course.

But this very understanding of mechanics left certain other things only the more mysterious. The barometer, for example. How it actually foretold the weather. His first suspicion of the intellects of people who were perfectly at home in the world of affairs was caused by Walter's remark, supported by Miss Arnold, that a barometer was not more wonderful than a clock which was able to tell the time. Let alone the difference between telling and foretelling, anybody could see how a clock worked;

the spring, like the steam of the engine, wanted to get out, and the pendulum said, "No, you don't, except a tick at a time," and so the wheels went round and the day was measured. He was astounded that anybody could think of a clock and a barometer "in the same breath". One was a machine, but the other knew the secrets of the universe. The result of the discussion, besides upsetting his faith in people of affairs, was to leave him wondering whether the life of affairs was not, perhaps, a wise provision for regulating the movements of an inconvenient curiosity. But that did not explain how the curiosity, with its undercurrent of thrills and fears, like the ups and downs of the barometer, arose.

CHAPTER III

OUTSIDE his own household the people with whom George had the closest personal relations were the Markhams at the vicarage. From the first arrival at Bourneside they were intimate friends of his mother. Partly because Mr. Markham was the vicar, and partly because the vicarage stood high, actually overlooking the Camp, George thought of the Markhams as already half-way to Heaven and so not to be judged too hardly for their obvious incapacity in affairs. They belonged by right to the world of books. Their position, too, absolved them from blame in being on friendly terms with the stuck-up people who attended archery meeting. They had to know everybody.

Mr. and Mrs. Markham were oldish people, and consequently outside the range of anything but respect. There was a son at Oxford, whom George thought of as already almost a clergyman, and there were two daughters, Eleanor and Rose. They formed the link between the vicarage and Bourneside. Both were, in a sense, grown up, being over

twenty, but they were not too old to associate with children on equal terms. Eleanor was tall, dark and grave; Rose short, fair and lively. George was quick to see that they adored his mother and that all the rest of the relations between the two families were determined by that. For example, it could not escape him that the Markham girls took more notice of him than of Walter and Amelia. He being the youngest, this was perhaps natural, but at the back of his mind, George believed that the real reason why the Markham girls made a special favorite of him was that they were in his mother's confidence about his inferiority — which she welcomed in secret. He submitted, because he liked the Markham girls — particularly Eleanor — but he was always hoping that he would one day astonish them by a thousand runs at cricket, or killing a mad dog, or other evidence of masculine power. He could imagine them saying: "George, we have misjudged you. We thought you were no good for anything but books."

Meanwhile they lent him books, softened his relations with Miss Arnold, whom he felt they secretly despised, and took him out for walks, when he was divided between the pleasure of sympathetic companionship and the risk of giving himself away.

Sometimes he was afraid that it was all a ghastly misunderstanding; that they were in league with his mother to make him a clergyman. Then he would have to get up and say: "I am not good enough."

Color was lent to this apprehension by the fact that the Markhams took in pupils — generally children whose parents were in India. George had reason to believe that his mother regretted that she had not known this before she engaged Miss Arnold. Though he would have preferred to be taught by Eleanor Markham, who made him think of the Holy Women, he hoped that no change would be made now. Without understanding the reason, for the matter was never discussed in his presence, he felt the difference between his father and mother on the subject of church. His father was quite civil to the Markhams, and at harvest festival would even send vegetables, fruit and flowers to the church, but George felt that he would not like him to be a clergyman, and more than anything he dreaded a dispute between grown-up people, particularly with himself as the subject.

It was a little girl from the vicarage who first awakened in George the idea that his own feelings about the world might be respectable. It happened

soon after the revealing conversation about the clock and barometer. The little girl was not really a pupil of the Markhams; she was an Indian child, at school in Cleeve, the residential part of Barstow, and spending her holidays at the vicarage. Her name was Mary Festing. On first hearing it, George thought of somebody sad and remote, as became an Indian child. He could never believe that an Indian child was quite English, or that its parents were not somehow to blame. Color was lent to this by the fact that one Indian child he had known at the vicarage was in the habit of swearing. Eleanor Markham brought Mary Festing to tea. Directly he saw her, George recognized that she fitted the conception inspired by her name and unfortunate birth. She was thin, pale and black-haired, with slant eyes and cold hands, very grave and polite in her manners. She was just eleven, two years older than himself. On touching her hand he was conscious of a strange thrill, as if he had been introduced to somebody out of the *Arabian Nights*. She struck him as being finer in texture than anybody he had ever met, and he expected her to smell of spices. He observed that his mother was unusually tender to Mary Festing, and this confirmed his opinion that her parents had

wronged her. He also observed that his mother was gently committing Mary to him; she smiled as she looked from one to the other. This, while it pleased him secretly, put him on guard, and at tea-time he was shy and awkward. Eleanor Markham did not stop to tea. Walter was inclined to chaff the visitor, whom he evidently regarded as "a little old woman", and Amelia to giggle.

During tea-time it began to rain, so that the visitor must be entertained in the nursery. Walter, who was now more or less independent of weather, generously offered to join the party.

For a time the entertainment was rather formal. Amelia exhibited her dolls, persistently engaged in various domestic occupations on the shelves of a tall cupboard, while Walter made funny remarks, and George rather pointedly turned over the leaves of his books, with such leading questions as, "Has anybody seen my *Pilgrim's Progress*?" He knew perfectly well that he wanted to attract Mary Festing without seeming to. She was obviously bored by Amelia's dolls, and Walter's funny remarks did not amuse her. But when Walter turned the attention upon George's end of the nursery with: "Made anything lately?" George became shy and said gruffly:

"Oh, nothing much."

"George is always making machines that won't work," said Walter with a grin.

George was pleased to observe that Mary received the information with cold politeness. Anybody could see that she was not interested in machines. As for the slight upon his ability, he could have explained that his object was not to make things work, but to see and show how they worked. Besides, he was not allowed glue or solder, and soap is a poor substitute.

"But George is rather clever," said Walter in a patronizing tone.

"I'm not," he said indignantly.

Mary glanced at him out of her narrow eyes, and he felt that she disapproved of what appeared to be false modesty. But he didn't want her to think him clever. Presently she went to a window, and he was aching to ask her had she been to the Camp and did she know the Waterfall. Walter said:

"You should hear the blacksmith swear!"

This, considering her origin, was lamentably bad taste, but Mary did not seem to hear it. She turned to George and said: "Do you write po'try?"

Walter's yell of derision covered George's "No."

He said it unguardedly, wondering why he had never thought of writing po'try, and regretting that he hadn't.

"I believe he does," said Walter.

"I don't, I don't," said George furiously.

"I do," said Mary quietly, and Walter did not laugh any more.

The pictures interested her more than anything else in the nursery, and George began to revise his determination not to become an artist. This was the time of the Russo-Turkish War, and among the colored plates from Christmas numbers there were several recent illustrations from the front pinned to the walls. About the war itself George had the haziest ideas, but he hoped it would go on. His father and Walter were strongly pro-Turkish, because, as they said, the Turks were such good soldiers, but George had a sneaking regard for the Russians, because he had heard his mother say: "After all, they are Christians." Remembering that Mary Festing's father was a soldier, and for anything he knew fighting in this very war, he watched her progress round the walls with a thrill of anticipation. There was one picture in particular that appealed to him strangely. It represented a Servian woman, with her child in her arms, being

rescued from a savage-looking Turk by a Russian on horseback, who had run the villain through with his lance. The artist had made the picture symbolical rather than actual and given the Russian a shield with a cross on it. Whether or not the picture was a fair summary of the war, George did not know or care. He did not properly know who the Servians were, or where exactly they came in, but the name appealed to him as meaning something gentle, partly on account of the suggestion of "servant". The picture excited in him a feeling that he could not give a name to — yearning tenderness and passionate protectiveness combined, such as he felt toward little yellow ducklings, kittens and certain flowers. He hoped that Mary Festing would notice the picture, and when she came to it and stopped, he trembled in sympathy. He was glad, however, that she said nothing.

Walter, who had been following Mary round, with his hands in his pockets, whistling, and occasionally giving her the benefit of his knowledge to explain an incident of the war, suddenly exclaimed: "I say, you kids; let's play Russians and Turks."

They all said, "Yes, let's"; but only George could understand the extent of Walter's good-

nature. In his gratitude he forgot discretion and said impulsively:

“Mary ought to be a Servian princess.”

She darted him a glance of understanding. Amelia unthinkingly agreed to the proposal, but Walter began to demur.

“Oh, that’s rot,” he said. “Who are the Servians? They’re nobody; a potty little people. You always want to drag in something that nobody has ever heard of. And besides, there are not enough of us. No; you and Mary will have to be Russians, and Amelia and I will be Turks.”

George hesitated and looked at Mary. But she avoided his eyes, and her expression told him nothing. He thought her unfair; how could he explain, even to himself, why he wanted her to be a Servian princess? Amelia, anxious only to be conciliatory, began, “Couldn’t we —” but George cut her short with, “Oh, very well,” and Walter said, “Right-o!”

But they had reckoned without the visitor. With blazing eyes she advanced upon George, who backed in consternation. “You sneak!” she said. “You coward! You — you — you liar! You *are* clever, an’ you *do* write po’try, an’ you *do* hate the Turks *and* the Russians, and I’ve a jolly good mind to

smack your head. *I don't want to be a Servian princess, but — but — but — Oh, I hate you and I wish I had never seen you!*"

The last words rose to a squeak as she burst into tears. With a stamp of her foot and a gritting of her teeth she turned and fled from the room, and they heard her hurtling down the stairs.

"You've done it, Master Walter," said nurse composedly, as she put aside her sewing and prepared to leave the room. "Whenever you come up into the nursery there's trouble."

"I don't care," said Walter, but sought a chair. The other two had already sat down instinctively to recover from the assault upon their feelings. Amelia began to whimper, and Walter said: "Shut up! She's a young savage." George said nothing. Scared and humiliated as he was, he knew that he would not have missed that splendid fury for worlds.

Nurse came back to say that Master George was to go down to his mama.

Faced with the wrath of his elders, George found himself not afraid but indignant. It wasn't his fault, and it wasn't Walter's fault, he said to himself as he marched down the stairs with a new feeling of security.

He found his mother where they had left her in

the dining-room, with Mary's sobbing head in her lap.

"It wasn't our fault—" he began stormily, but his mother said:

"Ssh, George," and then: "You've hurt Mary's feelings."

"He hasn't," came from her lap.

His mother smiled, and stroking the black hair, continued:

"You wanted to rescue her.— was that it?"

"I didn't, I didn't," he said, coloring furiously.

"Well," said his mother, "you should stick up for your friends."

That struck him as horribly unfair. It wasn't his friends but his most sacred feelings that he had been required to stick up for.

"She isn't a friend of mine," he said, wondering at his own boldness.

"For your ideals, then," said his mother.

That was outrageous—as if one had been plunged into the catechism at dinner-time—and George began to kick the carpet sullenly.

"You can go, George," said his mother, and that, of course, made him feel in the wrong, and he began:

"I'll say I'm sorry if—" but his mother said:

"That will do, George," and Mary said: "I don't want to *speak* to him."

His report to the nursery was: "Oh, it's all right; she's blubbing, but mother isn't cross." At the same time he felt acutely dissatisfied — as if he had fallen between two stools. Loyalty apart, he didn't feel angry with Walter, nor did it strike him as unjust that Mary should have gone for him and not for Walter. He had played into her hands; it served him right for giving himself away. He was not yet capable of such an axiom as: "Women are the devil," but his reflections amounted to that. Behind it all was the conviction, not so much unwilling as distrusted for its audacity, that the women were right, and that in a world of people like Mary Festing, Eleanor Markham and his mother everything would go very smoothly.

From this time he began to hold up his head a little in his world of reality. He began to develop a sense of humor, and with his admiration for people like Walter was mingled a sort of compassion. They were so easily taken in. Walter, for example, believed that George was getting on at cricket and boxing. It was true that he was batting straighter and learning to guard his head, but that was not because he understood the rules any better, but

because he had discovered that if you laid yourself out at the right angle, so to speak, things had a way of doing themselves. What you didn't do was more important than what you did; it was all a matter of crafty evasion. It was the same in social intercourse. He found that by avoiding the point and using the words that other people used he could talk about things of which he was entirely ignorant, and still be listened to with respect. If, on the other hand, he stated a plain truth, they stared, or mocked, or got angry.

He did not see Mary Festing again except on purely formal occasions in the company of grown-ups, when he avoided her. She knew too much. His feelings toward her were oddly mingled of liking and resentment. He liked to think about her and to imagine her as an audience, but in her company he felt only the desire to insult her. She, on her part, treated him with lofty indifference, and Walter told him, to his secret pleasure, that she thought him a rude little boy.

In after life George recognized that the next two years were among his happiest. He was sufficiently at home in the world of affairs, lessons, orthodox games and polite conversation to escape notice — if not to win applause — and in his own world he

had the support of another opinion. He would not have recognized the opinion to be incarnated in the person of Mary Festing, and probably it was not consistently so, but was referred to this person or that among his acquaintances; but wherever he went, now, he had the companionship of an imaginary intelligence outside his own. Whenever the intelligence assumed a form inconveniently human — as in the person of his mother or Eleanor Markham — he could always bluff, and he found that with his mother, at any rate, a humorous attitude served as well as any other — though she occasionally looked wistful, as desiring fuller confidence.

The basis of his world remained the place — the house and the surrounding country. He was now allowed a certain amount of liberty to go about alone, and with every excursion fear became more and more absorbed in love. The beginning and end of his world was the Bourne. It summed up and explained everything, physical and emotional. The reason was partly topographical, because most of the acquaintances whose homes were the pretexts for his excursions lived upon the banks of the stream. None of them had anything so thrilling as the Waterfall, but several enjoyed the mystery of woods, with probable caves. As a rule, how-

ever, George's young friends ignored their advantages and tiresomely preferred playing on lawns or in fields to the possibilities of exploration; and the dawdling journey up or down the stream was always more to him than were the amenities of arrival.

He carried the Bourne in his heart, and it watered his dreams. For most of its length it ran clear and explicable, a brown-backed river of all work, with mills and quarries at intervals to keep it human. The mills were generally undershot, and so rather furtive in character — as people who concealed their motives — and they had the incidental interests of weirs and eel-traps. The quarries, though still human, were bolder in their effects; they made cliffs, echoed to blasting, and, moreover, supported a red-stained race of quarrymen, proverbial for lawlessness. But in the life of the Bourne there were certain episodes — let alone the Waterfall and the dark moments where it had drowned its man — which betrayed without explaining a nature that was beyond the reach of human understanding; a nature that found expression in the sound of “Doom!”

There was one place in particular that haunted George's imagination by day and night. Called, with sacred implication, the Grove, it followed upon

the menace of the Waterfall. Between them a mill, reached by a stone bridge with a graduated flood-board for warning — once the bridge had been carried away — gave a specious atmosphere of domesticity. The dwelling-house of the mill overhanging the stream, with a little window as if to spy upon it between its deep glide from under the bridge and broken entrance into the Grove. The mill garden gave access to the Grove, but George, not being on familiar terms with the miller, never went that way. He approached the Grove by the fields that flanked it above on either side. Climbing a broken wall, he was upon enchanted ground: a declivity, shaggy with trees and undergrowth, which ran down to the Bourne, now secretly murmuring. A little stone bridge, a single ivied arch without parapets, the masterpiece of a forgotten builder, connected one wooded flank of the Grove with the other. To George's companions the Grove was a favorite place for picnics: primrosing, paddling, blackberrying and nutting in their seasons, and games that grown-ups could share, such as hide-and-seek. Even Walter and Amelia were not wholly insensitive to the atmosphere of the Grove, and were occasionally subject to panic terrors — to be explained loftily afterward on the same grounds

of poachers — but to George the place was an eternal question. He felt that here, if anywhere, the secret of the Bourne was enshrined; the meaning of “Doom!” unraveled to such as could hear with gloss and commentary by the birds. If he had read *Siegfried* at this age he would have known that here was the place of illumination.

Wanting the key, he brooded continually over the enigma. The Grove meant something; something, too, connected with his own destiny. Throughout his life he was often there in dreams. He would climb the broken wall, make his way down through the undergrowth and follow the murmuring Bourne to where its right bank expanded into a lawny clearing. At the far end were two tall fir-trees, close together and very slender, their tops making a dark gesture upon the sky. Always that was the end of his dream: the dark gesture of the fir-trees as if they said, “Nevermore!” When he first read *The Raven* he understood that the bird was brother to the fir-trees.

In reality he knew what was beyond them. Once out of the Grove the Bourne had no secret, but watered fields and parks all the way to its degradation by a suburb before it joined the Arden at Barstow. Whatever meaning the Bourne had in

his life was to be discovered between the Waterfall and the Grove.

But though the Bourne was the main artery of his emotional life, as it was the core of his landscape, it by no means exhausted the wonder of the neighborhood. There was the Camp, for example. To reach it you followed the road from the smithy, alongside the Bourne, and at about half a mile climbed a steep ascent through a wood — the same that made the harp of dawn. You came out upon a great circular plain, with sweeping mounds and trenches half smothered in bracken. Higher still was the church upon its long Down, keeping a watchful eye, George thought, upon the dust of Pagan Rome. From here you could see the distant Severn through larches that forever sighed about Cæsar.

Partly because he knew that the Bourne was only a trickle to the Arden, and the Arden a gutter to the Severn, George always found himself taking a larger view of life in general when he stood upon the Camp. He came here when things had got into a muddle through being looked at too closely. It corrected the proportions of both space and time. Even the air was clearer upon the Camp, and the smell of thyme was enjoyed with a double meaning. George did not know much about the Romans, but

he imagined them to be stoical, and the sense of dead Romans ten deep under his feet gave him support in his own affairs. There were other memorials of Rome in the neighborhood; wide marching roads, a whole chain of camps on the wooded ridge that, except at one point, hid the Severn, and at a distant farm the remains of a villa. From George's Camp none of them was visible, and the villa he had not even seen; but they were present in his mind as he paced the thyme-scented plateau, and they gave him confidence.

From the Camp it was easy to reach the Down which, with less definite inspiration, commanded an even wider prospect. Below the country unrolled like a map all the way to the hidden Severn, and beyond were the faint hills of Wales. The knowledge that this was the very "Down so free" of the part song provided a general atmosphere of adventure. From here both space and time, though enlarged, were gloriously mixed and moving; not stoicism, but progress was the moral. To George the prospect from the Down was never for a moment still. The sky rolled, the white roads marched and forked, and one century trod upon the heels of another. The galloping shade of Hickory Stern with his bride a-pillion was not more romantic than

the crawling train, nor the Haunted House than the tall chimneys of Barstow. The world, past, present and future, was at your feet. By rounding the shoulder of the Down you had in comfortable perspective the more intimate problems of life: immediately below the vicarage garden, beyond the Camp, and hidden by its fringe of wood, the rich perplexity of joys, hopes and fears that was Bourne-side. From the Down even the Bourne could be regarded as running water with some trick of associations.

All George's further excursions were westward. The Severn, too big and too far for personal associations, was in a double sense the Bourne of his world, and it called him strangely. In all his young days he never got to it alone, but the wooded ridge that commanded it was not beyond a long afternoon's walk. From here he could look down upon the Flats and in imagination smell the ooze and share the traffic of the great river. Not only the ports of Wales, but America, India and Africa were made free to him by the shining highway of the West. At rare intervals he was actually taken to the Severn, by trap, at a point that was almost overcrowded with materials for wonder. It was the place where Saint Augustine met the British

chiefs and where the steam ferry crossed to Wales — for the Tunnel was not bored yet; it commanded the mouth of the Wye, and its red and white cliff enshrined not only alabaster — concrete earnest of the New Jerusalem — but the fossil relics of prehistoric life. When in after years George heard that hopeful men were digging and dredging in this neighborhood for the secret of Shakespeare, it seemed to him not unreasonable. Anything might be found there.

For many years this was his nearest acquaintance with the sea. Except, of course, for his periodical visits to Barstow, where ships came up among the houses, and if not ivory, apes and peacocks, at any rate “bales of merchandise” could be seen upon the quays. But as yet Barstow was an impression too overwhelmingly rich and confused for anything but headache. The crowded pictures overlapped; the chanting of sailors and briny and tarry smells got mixed up with the taste of ham which father, neglecting the bank and so arresting the currency of the world, provided for you and mother in an Italian restaurant between shopping and shopping. George was not very much interested in what he ate, but it always seemed to him that ham was rather a poor pretext for such reckless interference

with the business of the world — particularly in a frescoed room that feigned the Sunny South. Something pink and foaming to the accompaniment of music and dancing, with vine-leaves about, and the police coming in at the end to recall his father to duty would have been more appropriate. Often he was sick the next day, and his general impression of Barstow was that it was a grand but disorderly place — rather like Vanity Fair in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

As yet he had found no means of expression for the quivering response of his nature to the sights and sounds about him. "Po'try" he tried, but it remained a mechanical exercise, a barrier rather than a channel, with only a word here and there that touched reality. He drew and painted, but for memory and elucidation rather than expression, and it was more often a map than a picture that recorded the wonder of an afternoon. Music, perhaps, came nearest to the function of a language. Most things, seen, felt, smelled, or tasted, as well as heard, seemed to have their symbol in sound; the music of dawn was repeated more faintly at sunset when the tops of the fir-trees in the Grove for a moment glowed and thrilled; but since George had not begun to learn music, and none of his family

played or sang, he had to rely on the organ in church for the articulate expression of his feelings — with the constant risks of betrayal into blushing. To his mother he remained dumb. He loved her and he would have been glad of some channel of communication for the confidence she so evidently desired; but, somehow, words did not seem to be the channel. At the back of his mind was the idea that he was not meant to say, write, paint or play his feelings, but live them. Then his mother would understand.

CHAPTER IV

THE only thing that bothered him was the sense of failure. He would have to do something some day, and he was being prepared for nothing. Walter had already left Mr. Shipway's for Barstow Grammar School, but no sign had been made that George was to follow him to Mr. Shipway's. He was now nearly twelve. Could it be possible that his parents did not consider him worth sending to school at all? In that case he supposed he would have to be a carpenter or go to work in one of the quarries or even down a coal-mine. Except for the disgrace to his family he would not have minded any of those occupations, and he thought his parents rather unpractical in discouraging his friendships with the carpenter, the blacksmith, the bootmaker and other tradesmen. He envied the boys who assisted them, partly because they wore white coats and corduroy trousers, and he preferred their company to that of the boys whose acquaintance he made through Walter. He was now just too good at orthodox games to be popular

as a butt, and not good enough to become a leader. Moreover, Mr. Shipway's pupils despised him for being still under a governess, while the working boys were inclined to admire him for his book-learning. He did not connect book-learning with fitness for any respectable occupation, nor did Walter's friends encourage him to believe that book-learning was the real meaning of school.

That year George and Amelia had whooping-cough, and afterward George did not seem to recover. He felt languid and at the same time restless, and sometimes he was afraid that his heart was going to jump out of his mouth. One morning he was told to stop in bed, and Doctor Fleetwood came to see him. Doctor Fleetwood was brown and leathery, and walked with bent knees — conditions that George supposed to be due to baked apples for breakfast and riding too much on horseback. The doctor put on his glasses with both hands and said, "Well, you're a skinny fellow." George said he couldn't help it, and the doctor said, in a determined voice, "We'll see about that," and put a little cold thermometer under his arm, telling him to count two hundred. George counted four hundred and seventy-two, but his heart got ahead of him, and he was glad that the doctor was

there to put it back in case it jumped out on the pillow. On the whole, however, the thermometer made him feel better, and then Doctor Fleetwood began to thump his chest and back, and listen for the result with a little black trumpet. He looked rather grave, and mother, who had been smiling at the foot of the bed, walked to the window and held her hands together.

In the conversation that followed, George heard something about valves and a murmur, which last he connected with the Children of Israel and complaining, and he said in a cheerful tone, "I'm all right, mother."

Doctor Fleetwood laughed, and said: "Of course you are, young sharper." His mother laughed too, but rather anxiously.

After that morning, George felt himself surrounded by an atmosphere of consideration. He was not allowed to play cricket for the rest of the summer—it was then July—or to go for long walks, but was told to sit about in the Orchard and read. For a time he supposed that he was going to die, and that explained why his parents had not thought him worth sending to school. It was odd, in that case, why they were always talking, though obscurely, about his future. Everybody seemed

interested in him. Even Walter, when he came home in the evening, would look at him with an expression of mingled envy and good-humored disdain and say, "Well, how's the professor?" And Miss Arnold was curiously elated about him. For some reason or other George's father had altered his opinion of Miss Arnold and now treated her with great respect.

Then suddenly, it was all explained. George was to go right away to a proper school. So far from being good for nothing, he was regarded as being good for almost anything if, as his father said, he made use of his opportunities.

Privately, George decided to be a prime minister, but it appeared that there was no need for him to make up his mind in a hurry. He was to have the advantages of a good education. Delighted as he was at the idea of going away to school, George could not help wishing that his father did not expect so much of him or that he would say exactly what he expected and explain more clearly what the advantages of a good education were. George had great admiration for his father, but he was half afraid that there must be a misunderstanding somewhere — possibly due to his own duplicity at lessons. His father was a master of affairs, but

George doubted his knowing his way about the fields of learning. This did not imply any criticism, but rather the reverse. His father was too big for such things; he left them to women. If George could have put it into words, he would have said that his father was wise but not clever. He thought of him as connected with the soil, and his feelings toward him were the same mixture of love, reverence and fear that he felt for bulls and other large animals. He hoped that Miss Arnold had not taken his father in.

He guessed that his mother was at the bottom of it. When she talked to him about going away to school she held him tight, but her eyes were shining. Something she said about Oxford prompted him to say:

“Must I be a clergyman?”

His mother laughed, and kissed him, and said:

“Not if you don’t like; but you are to be a great man.”

George sighed as he wriggled free. Nobody seemed to be able to give him any practical information.

However, the idea of going away to school was too glorious for any misgivings to spoil it. Even the thought of the examination that should ex-

pose the hollowness of his pretensions to learning only made him feel reckless. He was in for it now. He went about telling everybody that he was going away to school: Dicky Dando; the blacksmith's boy, who at once promised him a pistol; and very particularly a farmer who had once called him "a young softy", because he had wept over a dead pigeon. Then he had to make special journeys to his favorite haunts: the Camp, the Grove, the Down and the hill overlooking the Severn; to see how it felt to stand there knowing that he was going away to school. He felt that the Camp and the Down approved, but the fir-trees in the Grove murmured a warning. "Examination!" they said ironically. Something kept him from thinking about going away to school in the presence of the Waterfall. He would prefer that the Waterfall should not know until he was actually gone.

There was a reason for this, too obscure to be put into articulate language, but nevertheless true. The school he was going to was on the sea — in Cornwall — a word which gave him the picture of a plunging headland with white foam at its base. The Bourne ran into the Arden, and the Arden into the Severn, and the Severn into the sea. The

map told him that St. Piran's might almost be called upon the Severn Sea. Even there he would be dogged by the Bourne. He wondered if above the roaring of the sea he would still hear the dull continuous thunder of the Waterfall. He could not remember when it had not been the ground-bass of his life. Even when recalling the dream-life in Barstow, he now suspected that what he had taken for the hum of traffic was in reality the dull continuous thunder of the Waterfall heard from afar. Convinced that his destiny was in some way connected with running water, he thought it advisable that the sea should not know beforehand that he came from the Bourne. It gave him extraordinary relief when somebody told him that St. Piran's was really upon the Atlantic; the word meant something leaping up and down, whereas the Severn Sea could only mean flowing, flowing. The Atlantic would have forgotten all about the Bourne. Still, it was advisable not to think about going away to school in the presence of the Waterfall.

In the world of affairs he was already a hero. His father now for the first time held long conversations with him about cricket and those parts of learning that were only remotely connected

with real books, such as Latin, and Walter called him a "lucky kid". As for Amelia, she hung upon his footsteps all day long. His mother talked to him principally about clothes and the care of his health, which was now restored.

The only person who seemed dissatisfied with the idea of his going away to school was Eleanor Markham. She did not say anything, but George could feel her disapproval. He was afraid that she saw through him. Eleanor, of course, knew all about schools and Oxford. One day she had him to tea all by herself, and he hoped that she was going to give him some practical tips about the examination. But the only serious thing she said was: "Be yourself, my dear boy."

He said that he would, wondering which one, and then, thinking that it might remove what he supposed to be the cause of her anxiety, he said:

"Of course, I needn't be a clergyman unless I like."

"That's all right," she said, with her grave smile. "What would you like to be?"

"I don't know," he said.

He thought her rather unkind not to suggest something. Evidently she was determined to let him rush on to his fate in the shape of the exami-

nation. But by this time he was prepared to take the consequences. He would have been away to school. Considering the expense, there was even a morbid pleasure in imagining how his father would look when he said: "George, you have ruined me." With the idea of showing Eleanor that he didn't care, he began to talk rather boastfully about how far and how high he could jump. She listened politely, but he could see that she was not really impressed, and after that he decided that on the whole he preferred Rose. She was a cheery person, and she had already told him that school would make a man of him, which was all that he really wanted.

He was to go to school after Easter. As the time approached, his elation was not lessened, but complicated by regrets. Disturbing as his world was, and subject to the inconvenient curiosity of such people as his mother, Eleanor Markham and Mary Festing, he was leaving it all behind. It was all the same whether he stopped away in triumph or came back in disgrace; his relations with the world of reality would never be quite the same again, and he had only half explored it. There were all sorts of things he wanted to know: about his mother, the Waterfall and the Grove; until

now he had been content to let them wait, but now they became pressing. It was like leaving a puzzling tale unfinished. Anyhow, it was too late now, and he was glad that the Easter holidays with Walter, and the constant come and go of companions interested in himself, kept him from wondering.

Then, on the very day before he left home, he suddenly slipped up in the world of other people, where he was beginning to know his way about, and tumbled down into the heart of his own world. He, Walter and another boy, Tom Burchell, about two years older than himself, had spent the afternoon in the Grove in an aimless sort of way, climbing trees, damming the stream with large stones in the attempt to catch roach in their hands, and generally killing time. All this, of course, was evidence of Walter's good-nature, since he already talked bass and might have been playing cricket with older friends. Occasionally he would remember his position and dissociate himself from the other two by pitting them in some trial of strength or skill, when Tom generally won. In view of to-morrow, George did not mind this. At any time he had very little of the competitive spirit, particularly with people he did not like. Tom

Burchell, who was the son of the local auctioneer and still at Mr. Shipway's, was inclined to be a bully. George knew that Tom envied his going away, and it was partly the desire not to seem to swagger that kept him from trying to outdo him.

At tea-time, they dawdled home by a high field on the farther side of the Bourne. At a point opposite the foot of the Orchard, George spied something yellow gleaming in the low ground at the water's edge. Running down the bank, he found it to be a flag iris, the first he had seen that year.

The extraordinary delicacy of the flower, un-sheathed in a world that was yet unready, touched him strangely. It was like a naked soul. Other flowers were beautiful, but they had by comparison what he could only describe as a woolliness, a roughness of texture, which made them one with their surroundings. The iris was mystically apart, and it aroused in him a yearning tenderness and passionate protectiveness combined. By a natural association it recalled the picture of the Servian woman, and Mary Festing.

He plucked the flower, and as he followed the others at a little distance, he kept laying the petals against his cheek. The silken touch thrilled him.

The flower had become the symbol of the disturbing world that he was leaving. When Walter, turning his head carelessly, said, "What have you found, young 'un?" George, made wise by experience, said, "Only a flower." Walter laughed good-naturedly and said: "Silly kid," and Tom said: "Look what's going to school!"

As they were about to enter the house, it occurred to George that he could not take the flower into the presence of his mother. She would not understand, or rather, she would understand too much, and say something embarrassing before Tom. He hesitated, intending to slip through a side door into the Yard and so to the kitchen. Walter, as host, stood back from the front door and said, "Come on," and George said, "Just going to put my flower in water." Tom said, "Sappy!" George laughed and was about to turn when Tom, with a quick movement, cut off the flower in his hand.

The next moment George knew that he had struck Tom full upon his grinning mouth. He could only judge what expression had leaped into his own eyes by the look of absolute terror in the eyes of the other boy as he reeled backward. Tom was not a coward and, recovering, he put up his

hands. But he was already demoralized, and astonished at his own fury, for his head was perfectly clear though his heart was burning, George got home again and again upon the fat incredulous face. He knew that he would gladly kill Tom if let alone, and mingled with his rage was joy at the confirmation of his belief that these people of affairs were helpless the moment they were matched with conviction. In cold blood Tom could box better than he. For George was not fighting blindly; as if he had been a spectator, he knew that he was using every scrap of science he had ever learned. All that he was or knew seemed to come to his aid, now that he was fighting in a sacred cause.

Walter, who at the first blow had cried, "Serve you right, Tom!" tried to interfere. He circled the two, laughing nervously and saying: "Let him alone, George!" "That's enough!" "You've licked him!" And George knew that he was getting really frightened. Finally, Walter seized his brother from behind and held him off, saying: "You'll kill him, you little fool!"

"I mean to," said George quietly, and struggled to get free. But Walter held him firmly and then, seeing the look of utter exhaustion on Tom's face

as he reeled against a tree on the Lawn, George, too, was afraid, and put his hands down.

It was then that his mother came to the front door. Invisible from the windows, the fight had only reached her as a confused scuffling until her anxiety was aroused by the absence of cries. Some instinct told her the situation, and with, "Oh, George, what have you done!" she ran to Tom, who leaned against the tree mopping his face.

The touch of sympathy was the last straw, and he began to howl: "Lemme go home, lemme go home!"

Mrs. Tracy tried to get him indoors to wash his face, but he would not be persuaded, and after making the two boys shake hands, Walter, only too glad to escape an explanation, took the dazed youth away. George felt curiously calm. He was glad that he had thrashed Tom, but he was not elated at his own prowess. He was a little alarmed at it, as if not he but some power behind him had won the victory. The only explanation he would give his mother was:

"He broke my flower."

He knew that it sounded absurdly inadequate, but how could he explain the sacred rage that had filled him? He could not explain it to himself.

It was all mixed up with Mary Festing, the Servian woman, his mother, Eleanor Markham, the Bourne, going-away and half a dozen other things. Not that he had thought of each or any of them while he was fighting. On the contrary, he had never felt so completely one with himself; more even than in church the two worlds had come together. So, with a sense that, though the words were inadequate, the statement was more than enough, he kept saying sullenly:

“Well, he broke my flower.”

Grieved and perplexed, his mother told him that he had better go up to his bedroom until his father came home. In the interval, Walter gave his version of the fight, with the result that when George was called to his father he saw at once that no serious trouble was to be feared. His father was both astonished and grimly amused. He eyed George with a new curiosity and addressed him severely but with what George felt to be complete respect.

“You must learn to keep your temper,” he said. “At school you will have to give and take.”

George could have argued the matter. He had not lost but found his temper, and besides, the situation could not occur at school. One did not

carry one's naked soul in one's hand at school. But with a new admiration of his father's generosity, he said humbly:

"I won't do it again, father."

"At any rate," said his father, "there doesn't seem to be much the matter with your heart."

George knew that he had still to reckon with his mother. For the second time in his life, his reflections amounted to: "Women are the devil." They were so inquisitive; they could not let well alone. What made it worse, of course, was that his mother would know very well that one part of him yearned to tell her all about it.

As he had expected, his mother came to him after he was in bed. She carried a candle, shading it with her hand.

"Are you asleep, George?" she said foolishly. Recognizing in her tone the mixture of gravity and secret joy that he both loved and dreaded, he wished that he could successfully pretend to be asleep.

"No, mother," he said, in a tone intended to warn her that it was no use.

He heard her sigh as she put down the candle. After a moment she sat down on the bed and felt for his hand. He did not resist, but his body stiffened under the clothes.

"George!" she whispered, and gave his arm a little shake.

"I've said I'm sorry," he muttered into his pillow.

"But you are going away to-morrow," she said.

He knew that half of him was enjoying her tenderness, and he wished he could see how she looked. But he kept his eyes closed.

"George!" she whispered again, with quivering lips upon his cheek, "tell me all about it."

"I've *told* you, mother," he said stubbornly.

"Yes, yes," she murmured, now reckless in her love, "but why did you fight?"

"He broke my flower," he said.

"Ah, but it wasn't only the flower," she said eagerly. "Tell me — won't you tell me, George?"

The appealing note hardened him, and he turned over in the bed. He could feel his mother trembling, and half of him yearned to her. But he could not let himself go, and when she repeated more coldly: "Won't you tell me?" he said, in a tone of irritation:

"I really don't know what you mean, mother."

She waited for a moment and then stooping, kissed him quietly and rose. Even then she loitered in the room, straightening things on the

dressing-table. At last she moved slowly to the door. Until she had passed out, George would not open his eyes, and then only to see her shadow upon the wall of the passage. By its trembling he knew that she was weeping silently. He lay in an agony that was also a luxury of love. He longed to cry out: "Mother, mother, come back!" but the words would not come. The shadow passed from the wall to lurk in his heart for the rest of his life.

CHAPTER V

GEORGE flung himself into the life of school with all the ardor of the neophyte. The dreaded examination he found to be only a genial formality which gave him a place among boys greatly his inferiors in general intelligence and knowledge, but so much better acquainted with the rules of the game that neither he nor they discovered the former fact to his disadvantage. George was a good listener, and his genuine respect for people who could carry off routine with an air made him popular. The routine itself he found amusing. It was all too far away from reality as he felt it to arouse doubts or questions in matter of detail. He made many mistakes, but being always the first to laugh at them, he disarmed more serious disapproval. Ragging he almost claimed as a right; he would not have believed himself to be at a proper school unless the other fellows had plagued him a little, and bullying was not more than a romantic legend.

St. Piran's was near the mouth of an estuary

that opened into the bay of Porth Enys. The school was just too far from the sea, and the life was too highly organized, to permit more than a gradual and fragmentary acquaintance with the enchanted element. Disciplined bathing gave no time for dreams and kept the water as bright and blue and the sands as golden to an occupied mind at close quarters as they looked from the dormitory windows. Then there were headlong streets in Porth Enys and gray moors inland to be glimpsed in the intervals of doing something with all your might. All the conditions and surroundings were so different from any that he knew that there was no roosting-place in them for familiar associations. It was like beginning life over again with a blank but eager mind.

As before, however, life was dominated by a sound. It came from the sea, and in character it varied from a deep lowing — which prompted the “suck in” to which George obediently fell a victim — of a cow abandoned on an island to a clear ringing note like the upper harmonics of a great bell. But however affected by wind or weather, the sound was always rhythmical with a definite come and go — as when you whistle with alternately outblown and indrawn breath. Actually it came

from a bellows buoy on a reef out in the bay by the lighthouse, but to George it became the voice of the whole horizon encircling his new world. Its message to him was that of urgency—translated in the key of his mood by the words: “Keep the pot boiling.” The pace varied as his energy increased or flagged, but it was always a little ahead of his natural movement as determined by the past, and so he was never allowed to vegetate.

At the time he did not consciously compare the new sound with the old, though his deeper nature responded to the difference between them. The difference was repeated in the tides of the estuary, the rhythmical ebb and return obliterating the character of a river as he would have conceived it. Thus, without his knowing it, everything conspired to lift him out of his own world. Growing and flowing were succeeded by periodical activity; the dominating sound of his new life, though in a sense continuous, was recurrent rather than persistent, and came from around instead of from below; and since his mind, eager for the sense of adventure, leaped at “Atlantic,” to the entire forgetting of “Severn Sea,” the color of his days was blue instead of brown. If he had been capable at the time of analyzing the difference in his

general conditions, he might have said that it represented the difference between the clock and the barometer.

Inspired by regularity in a world that was altogether new, and difficult enough to absorb all his attention, George "kept the pot boiling," with benefit to his progress in both work and play. He gained rather than lost by showing no definite talent that coincided with any official grind or game. His masters approved him as vaguely clever, and his companions as vaguely a good sportsman. Both remarked his willingness. His house-master preserved about him the silence which anticipates a future credit to the establishment, but cautioned his wife against spoiling. She trusted that she knew better than that, and at tea with the Head's wife, spoke of Tracy as "a cheerful little soul."

The inevitable bout of homesickness was late, short and severe. It came after the trying day following the mid-term holiday, when George, being absorbed in recent memories of a visit to a "British village" of cave-dwellings up on the moor, got into difficulties with his class-master. That night he dreamed of the Grove, and his tears became the Bourne swelling in his heart and bearing

him on until the dark gesture of the tall fir-trees turned to the shadow of his mother's face on the wall, forgotten until now, and he awoke crying, "Mother, mother!" Through the long hours he lay haunted by dear memories of Bourneside, and rose exhausted to a gray, featureless, unfriendly sea and the white mocking of the bar at the mouth of the estuary.

For the next few days he crawled at work and play in a loud confusing world of pitiless men and boys, with a heart that seemed swollen to bursting with all he had ever loved. Misery culminated in a headache that made work impossible and put him into the hands of women. The next day he was violently sick, and in the recovery he found himself remorsefully keen to take hold of his difficulties again. It was as if he had finally shed a self until now only kept in abeyance by the novelty of his surroundings and waiting its chance to give him trouble; and thereafter St. Piran's, with all that concerned it of pleasures or pains, became his pride, and he thought of Bourneside with affection, it is true, but chiefly as the place where he might presently swagger about St. Piran's.

The holidays found him the complete schoolboy — perhaps a little more consciously so than the

schoolboy generally is. He was the schoolboy by conviction; glad to go home, glad at the prospect of coming back, gladdest of all in the company of grown boys, wearing the same badge as he wore, as far as Barstow. His father would see them and recognize them for his colleagues.

His father met him at Barstow, and with admirable tact remembered not to kiss him until the train had borne his colleagues away. His father's manner to him was affectionately respectful; and George said, to encourage him, "I see you've got the same pony."

"Yes, we haven't changed much," said his father modestly, as he took the reins from the boy who had looked after the trap, and George felt by comparison all the wonderful changes that had taken place in himself.

For the first three miles of their drive they were able to keep up their respective positions of stay-at-home and returning hero, because there was nothing in the roads to awaken associations, but when they had passed the railway station that was the Bournside approach to Barstow, and the long white road with its heavy elms lay before them, George nestled in close to his father and said:

"It is nice to be coming home."

His father changed hands with the reins and put his left arm about him with a firm pressure that brought back the mixture of love, reverence and fear that was George's natural feeling toward him.

Secure in his father's arm, he was able to play the friendly critic to each succeeding feature of his old world as it welcomed him: the church on its far Down, the Camp, and the trees that formed the upper edge of the Grove. Even when, sitting a little closer to his father, he heard the diapason of the Waterfall, and his whole nature responded, as roof-timbers to the pedal-note of an organ, he was able to say to himself:

"There you are, Old Growler."

The Waterfall nodded to him across the fields as they ran down and up the gentle dip in the road, and then the long wall of the Garden, with its turreted angle, reached out to him, and he was in his mother's arms.

He found himself responding to her with a freedom that delighted him. After all, there was nothing between them. He could not see that, glad as she was to hold him, she was still a little disappointed. His very demonstrativeness, frank and free as it was, proved that the boy she held

in her arms was not the boy who had gone away. He only noticed that as she pushed back the hair from his forehead and said, "You've grown," she smiled rather wistfully.

The effect of the holidays was to establish a whole series of new relations with the people he loved. He approached them with the pull of old associations it is true, but from a new standpoint. He now recognized in them qualities that he had only felt before. His regard for his mother was now mainly protective; he seemed to realize for the first time that she was a small, rather timid woman, and that she was beginning to look old. He found himself calling her "little mother." It was now he who proposed the evening walk at the top end of the Garden, he who moved proudly, while she, a little more bent than he remembered, hung on his arm. The broad hat and the red cloak he claimed as a right. There was no longer any risk of embarrassment; she took what he gave gratefully, and it was only in an occasional silence between them that he felt the moving of an old curiosity.

His father had emerged from old conceptions with triumphant clearness and solidity. George now understood, as he had only surmised before,

that his father was a remarkable man. Exactly wherein his remarkableness lay he could not have said, but it was expressed in the effect of a deep foundation. Compared with his father, the much cleverer masters at school, and the neighbors, whom George was now able to regard with detachment, struck him as jerry-built. Sometimes he thought of his father as like the old Norse heroes. It was the nature of the soil that his father was rooted in, and from which he drew his nourishment, that baffled George. By this time he knew that it was not wealth; so far from controlling all the money in the world, the bank was relatively a small affair. Nor, seriously and energetically as his father pursued the business of the bank, did George believe that it was the bank that morally supported him. Whatever it was, it enabled him to be firm, deliberate and comparatively silent; other people might run about, but he sat still and smiled, not craftily nor sardonically, but with the effect of one who knows.

As if George's report from school had given him the assurance he needed in a region that he did not pretend to understand, his father began to hint at his purpose regarding him.

"I hope you will do well at school, my boy,"

he said one Sunday afternoon, as together they examined for wasps the nectarines on the high wall of the Garden. "Old Walter has done very well for what he is to be."

George would have liked to ask his father what he meant him to be, but he knew that a direct question would be useless.

"You see," his father went on, "different people have different powers. You can only work with your head, and that takes longer. We want men with heads."

It was tantalizing, but George was now too keen about school to bother much about his ultimate destiny. He suspected something to do with politics. He could not have said exactly why, but though his father did not talk much about politics, George felt, somehow, that he was a practical part of them.

He believed that his father was thinking about politics, now, as they walked arm in arm up the Garden. They passed through the door into the Orchard, and, after looking into the cowshed, went to the low wall which divided the Orchard from the two fields. From here they could see the Waterfall away down on the right, and the Grove lying beyond.

His father leaned on the wall with folded arms, and said:

"I'm thinking of buying that field of Gardiner's."

This, except for a scrap of orchard where the ground rose, was continuous with the Bourneside fields, and for nearly half a mile covered the whole space between the Barstow road and the Grove. George was interested, and he said:

"Shall you buy the Grove, too?"

His father looked at him amusedly and said:

"I don't think so. What good would it be?"

George could only say: "It's a jolly place."

"Anyhow," said his father, "it's not settled yet. Gardiner wants rather a lot."

As they moved away and walked down the Orchard to tea, George was thinking that his father's deep foundation must be in land. He remembered scraps of family history. For generations in another county the Tracys had owned land; it was only during his father's early manhood that they had lost it. He decided that when he was a man he, too, would own land, and for the first time he looked at Bourneside with a possessive eye. Always the back of the house, commanded by the higher ground of the Orchard, struck him as

pleasanter than the front. It got the afternoon sun, and there were four friendly gables with warm red roofs between, instead of the long, ivied, many-windowed face, with its unbroken line of gray roof. When he was a man he would make more of the back of the house.

The new sense of possession, that Bourneside belonged to them, gave bottom to his holidays and enhanced the brisk activities of school to which he would presently return. It was a good world. Of his father's conversation, however, the words that stuck in his mind were: "Old Walter." They seemed so true. In his eighteenth year, Walter, who had been rather a troublesome boy, was curiously sobered. He seemed to recognize his humdrum responsibilities and cheerfully to accept them. George looked up to him more than ever. His awed observation of the big fellows at St. Piran's told him that Walter, though not clever, was made of better stuff than most of them, and he often wished that Walter could be there. But Walter was quite happy at the grammar school, where he had only another year to go. Then he was going into the bank, and apparently he wished no other fate.

The change in Amelia was not less remarkable.

She had become amazingly cheeky. She was now a weekly boarder at a school in Cleeve—Miss Arnold having left before George went to St. Piran's. The high school movement was just beginning with the discovery or the recognition that girls are a sort of boy, and Amelia was an aggressive disciple. She and George spent most of their time in ragging. From what George could make out, it was Amelia who was running Bourneside. At school she had come in contact with the daughters of neighbors with whom the Tracys had not previously been on visiting terms, and the social horizon had extended. The death of the Archery Club, through over-exclusiveness, had given the opportunity for a rectification of social values, with the advantage of new blood, by means of tennis. Mrs. Tracy was a member of the Tennis Club, though, of course, she did not play. Thus, by natural evolution, mistakes were being repaired, with no reproach to anybody for neglect. George could see that, for the sake of her children, his mother was glad of the better standing. His father simply did not care, though he had been wheedled by Amelia into the promise of tennis-courts at the nearer end of the Orchard, the Lawn not being big enough. The trees were to be cut

down this autumn. As for croquet, it was too recently dead for the dream of revival.

There was one change that was too big for all its implications to be taken in at once. The Markhams were gone. George could not make up his mind whether to be glad or sorry. Of course he missed Eleanor and Rose; but he doubted if they made the proper atmosphere for a schoolboy. Eleanor, in particular, was too nearly connected with what he now thought of as the world of childhood. It was Eleanor Markham who had been responsible for Mary Festing, whom he sometimes remembered with irritation. He felt that, in schoolboy language, he owed her one. The Markhams had been succeeded by the Mostyns, whose three children were of negligible ages, the eldest being five. Mr. Mostyn was emphatically a man. He smoked the strongest tobacco in the largest pipes and when he was not in cassock, wore the roughest clothes — knickerbockers and a Norfolk jacket with the belt flying wide — that George had ever smelt or seen. He talked in a loud voice about beer, and was always appearing from somewhere unexpected with, "Now, you men!" or "Now, you boys!" George felt that Mr. Mostyn liked being a man as he liked being a schoolboy.

It surprised him to find Mr. Mostyn on shoutingly friendly terms with his father. He understood that Mr. Mostyn greatly admired his father. The fact was natural, but from what George could make out the reason appeared to be that his father never went to church. He heard Mr. Mostyn say to his father: "We want more men like you," which, though reasonable in the abstract, was unexpected in the particular.

At their first meeting Mr. Mostyn showed George pretty plainly that he would stand no nonsense. He addressed him as, "Well, young feller!" and went on to say that he supposed they were a lot of old women at St. Piran's. Walter and he were on the most familiar terms, and Walter said that he was "no end of a chap." George could quite believe that. In church he did not think he liked Mr. Mostyn. The new vicar was said to have improved the singing, but he seemed to have taken the thrill out of the organ and the color out of the windows as well. In the petitions of the litany, George was half expecting Mr. Mostyn to say: "And be jolly quick about it." He surmised that Mr. Mostyn would make things lively in Heaven — probably get the angels to play cricket. Mrs. Mostyn was beautifully dressed. She lay on

the sofa a good deal, sang in French, and called her husband "Swipes". Amelia said that she was artistic.

With so many new interests, George was not very much alone. He still had his own affairs, but he seemed to be looking at them from outside and above. His pilgrimages to favorite haunts were mainly for the purpose of comparison. The new sense of possession made an enormous difference to his feelings. Before, he had belonged to the Bourne; now, in a sense, the Bourne, or part of it, belonged to him. The Waterfall had not lost its power to thrill him, but he could address it aloud as "Old Growler"; the Grove still held a mystery, but he already saw it with a possessive eye, as one might think of a family ghost. When he went to the Camp he still felt the confidence of dead Romans under his feet, but in the interval he had seen a British village, and he knew now that the Camp was "comparatively modern"; and beyond the shining pathway of the Severn he saw the leaping of the Atlantic.

On one of his excursions he met Tom Burchell. At the recognition from afar on a lonely road, both boys began to walk a little stiff-legged. George was prepared to fight if necessary, but he had lit-

the hope of licking Tom in cold blood. Tom looked heavier than ever, while George, though he had grown, was thinner than before, and at the moment, tired with walking. But from a dozen yards, Tom called out: "Hullo, Tracy!"

The name itself implied respect, and George answered gladly: "Hullo, Burchell!" They shook hands, and Tom turned in George's direction. George would have liked to say that he was sorry for having lost his temper the last time they met, but he was afraid that it would seem like swaggering, and it was Tom who said:

"I say, it served me right."

"I was a silly kid," said George.

"No, you weren't," said Tom; "but I don't know how you did it."

"Nor do I," said George honestly.

"Of course," said Tom, "I ought to have known that you wanted it for a specimen. I'm going to be a doctor."

George let the misconception go, and for the rest of the walk they talked about what Tom called science, which gave him the right advantage. Afterward George found that Tom's misconception about the flower bothered him a little. Not because he wanted to explain, but because it re-

minded him that he had lost something. Undoubtedly the queer feelings excited by the flower had some practical value, or he couldn't have licked Tom in the strength of them.

CHAPTER VI

IT was on his return to St. Piran's that George made the first real friendship of his life. Until now other people had adopted him. Among his new housemates was a little Irish boy, Miles Darragh, a few months younger than himself. Directly he saw Miles, George recognized in him something that belonged to his own world. Miles was very pale and delicate-looking, with apprehensive gray eyes, and he spoke in a low quivering voice. Evidently he was confused and frightened by his new surroundings, though he bore himself with a curious dignity.

The last, however, did not preserve him from the usual attentions, and in the aimless half-hour after tea he was subjected to some gentle ragging. Leaning against a desk, with his hands behind him, Miles answered politely the questions put to him, but, as George recognized, with more candor than the occasion deserved. His father, it appeared, was dead, but had been a soldier. Sympathetic, but kept from interfering, not by the fear of

physical consequences, but by the disinclination to give himself away, George appreciated the delicacy that kept the boys from asking Miles any questions about his mother. She might be dead, too. George wanted to tell the new boy not to be so simple, but, at the same time, he was conscious of a queer wish to see him humiliated. It was very like the feeling which had made him want to insult Mary Festing.

From questions about his home — though Irish by birth, Miles now lived in Cornwall — the boys passed to his attainments. What did he know about Latin?

“I know Latin,” said Miles quietly.

The statement made a sensation; but before anybody could think of a rough test for what it was worth, the inevitable blockhead rushed at it with:

“Well, how does Latin begin?”

Only George laughed, and while he was wondering why nobody else did, the new boy said very gravely:

“Latin begins with *Amor*.”

This time everybody laughed with relief at the exposure of the preposterous claim, and somebody said mockingly:

“And what does *Amor* mean?”

"Love," said the new boy in his quivering tones. George felt his cheeks flame, and that made him hostile. It was as if the new boy were an informer. The others were now in full cry for sport, and one said:

"Who taught you Latin?"

"My mother," breathed the boy.

George felt that he hated him, with the cruel hate of jealousy. He recognized all the confidence he could not achieve with his own mother, dearly as he loved her, and when the other boys began to mimic their victim he joined in, as much to wound himself as to tease the white-faced child, who bore the mocking with sorrowful though tearless eyes and trembling lips.

In the night George heard Miles crying in his bed, and he covered his own head with the clothes to shut out the vision of his mother's shadow on the wall. He wanted to call out angrily, "Shut up!" Why couldn't they let him alone, these people who anguished his heart? But when all was quiet he had to get softly out of bed to peer at the sharply-cut profile of the new boy.

For the next few days George watched the new boy with jealous eyes. As far as possible, he avoided contact with him, and when it was neces-

sary to speak he was curt to rudeness. All the time he knew that if any attempt had been made to bully the new boy he would have rushed to his aid in fury. Fortunately, however, Darragh was let alone. His dignified behavior under ragging had made a good impression, and though it was at once evident that he was hopeless at cricket, he was a splendid swimmer. His astonishment at being cautioned against going out too far was too genuine to be mistaken for "side". As might have been expected, his unhealthy claim to Latin would not bear official investigation; it was admitted that he was remarkably fluent for his age, but with some general and not unhumorous remarks upon the female tendency to ignore construction in the zeal for language, he was put into the same form with George.

The latter did his best to keep down what he felt to be an unwholesome curiosity about the new boy, but it was no good. Meeting Darragh alone in the playing-field with a book, he stopped and said awkwardly:

"I say, kid, let's be friends."

"I will be glad," said Darragh simply.

"What's that rot?" said George, indicating the book.

"*Treasure Island*," said Darragh. "Have you read it?"

George had, but he was not going to give himself away, so he growled:

"Not me. I hate reading."

"I expect you've read too many books," said Darragh, with a twinkle in his large gray eyes. George rolled a reproving glance upon him and said:

"None of your cheek. But I used to be rather a sappy kid when I was at home," he added grandly.

Darragh asked him where he lived, and that gave George an opportunity to confirm for his own benefit his detached regard for his "people". Them and the landscape he sketched with tolerant phrases. All the time he was hoping that Darragh would talk about his mother; but Darragh, though he mentioned her name, did not volunteer any information about her, except that she was not very well off. Darragh's mother lived between Boscastle and Tintagel. He had no brothers nor sisters, and except for an occasional visit to London with his mother, had never been away from home before.

At first, George's adoption of Darragh was

probably a disadvantage rather than an advantage to the latter, since George was inclined to trail his coat on the younger boy's account. But that soon passed, and Darragh took his own place in the school. He was just too different from his companions to irritate them. It was almost as if he had been a girl. The effect of the friendship upon George was curious, and from his point of view extremely comfortable. What began as a self-protecting pose quickly became a habit. Finding in Darragh, in an extravagantly consistent form, what he took to be weaknesses in himself, he reacted in the opposite direction and cultivated a man-of-the-world attitude. On the other hand, when he wanted to indulge himself, he could always do so vicariously by getting Darragh to talk. Little by little he was externalizing in the person of Darragh the self that bothered him; it did not cease to develop, but he was relieved of its growing-pains. If Darragh saw through him, he was wiser or craftier than George's mother, Eleanor Markham and Mary Festing, and hero-worshiped George to the top of his bent in the qualities he affected. At the back of his mind George knew that Darragh belonged to the same dangerous class as his mother, Eleanor Markham and Mary Festing, but he could

be rude to Darragh as he could not be to them.

The first common interest that they discovered, or, rather, that George confessed, was that of landscape. Darragh had a great love for the country of his adoption, and George at once recognized that it was inspired by the same sort of feelings as was his own passion for the place he called "home". It had very little to do with natural advantages, and still less with what is ordinarily called romance. Indeed it was the boredom excited in both boys by a book of Cornish legends urged upon them by Mr. Lambert, the house-master, that first led them to talk about the subject. As George said, "Anybody could make up truer stories any day." What had happened was not nearly so real as what might happen. Though, as Darragh pointed out, it wasn't so much what might happen as what things *meant*: the sulky way the hills at the back of Porth Enys lumped along to the Land's End; the sudden woods of ash-trees in the valleys; the stealthy turns of the road from Porth Enys to Porthlew, the magic of the Mount in gray weather.

Then there were all the ancient monuments: cromlechs, "Merry Maidens," beehive huts, the Men Scryfa and the Men-an-tol. The stories about them, scientific and popular, were, of course,

entertaining; but they didn't say what they meant *now*. What was old Carn Galva up to? George and Darragh said something of the sort to Mr. Lambert on a conducted excursion to the British village on the flank of Castle-an-Dinas. He said that they had no imagination. All the way home they annoyed him by keeping up a sort of anti-phon: "Chysauster!" in a boggy tone from George, and "Carnaquidden!" in a scrambling run from Darragh. Mr. Lambert told them not to be silly.

With regard to Cornwall, George was, of course, only the enthusiastic amateur, but in Darragh he found the soil in which to plant his eagerly-formed impressions. It was Darragh, too, who made clear to him why he was bothered by the Bourne. Darragh hoped to become an artist. His drawings and paintings, elementary as they were, told George "in a minute" that they began to say what Darragh felt about Cornwall. They were as different from George's own explanatory exercises as they were from the tittle-tattle about the Waterfall which had decided him not to become an artist. He knew now that he was right, but for a different reason from the one he had supposed. He couldn't say what he felt with a brush or pencil.

It astonished him that the school drawing-master commended his work more than Darragh's; an artist from the colony in Porth Enys, who came upon them sketching, evidently knew better.

George began to understand that one reason why places like the Waterfall and the Grove bothered him was because he had no way of getting out of him what he felt about them. Darragh seemed to have all sorts of ways of saying what he felt about things. He was not, with people in general, communicative, but he was never embarrassed. He was able to say words like "mother" and "love" out loud, with evidently a full sense of their meaning, but without blushing. Often George felt the return of his anger against Darragh for his facility. The anger was partly caused by envy, partly by fear; he was afraid of what Darragh might say next. There were days when he exaggerated his man-of-the-world attitude to the point of brutality, and outraged himself in order to hurt his companion. Darragh would bear him in silence, and then George would say furiously:

"Yes, you think you understand me."

Darragh did not make any such claim. His admiration for George was genuine, because it was that of the simple for the complex character.

Knowing what he could do and what he wanted to do, Darragh made light of his own gifts, and regarded with superstitious veneration the undefined possibilities of his friend. The effect upon George was that Darragh expected something great of him, but would not say what it was.

The effect was increased by their comparative progress in school. From the master's point of view Darragh was a simple proposition. On the purely literary side he was far in advance of his age; while in mathematics, as in games, he was too blessedly incapable to be bothered about. The most that could be hoped of him in these activities was the minimum to keep his place in the school. The only regret was that his artistic talent absorbed the ambition which might have made him a shining classic.

George, on the other hand, was anybody's game. He seemed to be able to do anything, but not one thing better than another. Since he was not yet far enough advanced to betray his natural limitations in any particular subject, this made him a temptation to rivalry among his masters. He was a dark horse. The impression he got was that his masters were "at him" rather unfairly.

As yet George was too keen about the life of

school to suffer more than this immediate inconvenience of his undefined possibilities. There were many years before he need make up his mind what he wanted to do. The effect of trying to please everybody was to develop his less native powers and to make him feel more and more at home in what he had been used to regard as the world of make-believe. For the world of reality, with its disturbing hopes and fears, there was always Darragh; and Darragh's more placid and complete existence therein kept George from feeling a pretender in the other.

The companionship of Darragh during the winter term deepened and extended George's more conscious love of nature, without the misgivings that come from old associations. All his roots were in a different landscape. At this time of the year the characteristics of his new surroundings were at their most pronounced and most enchanting. The hills deepened in color; the air was moist and full of strange odors; and nightly the bay, visible from the dormitory windows, was jeweled with lights of the herring fleet under the shepherding of the beam that flashed in answer to the calling of the buoy. With greater familiarity the effect of urgency had passed, and the rhythm of life was deep and steady

enough to give time for dreaming. And always there was Darragh, with the land in his heart, to interpret the impression of the moment.

For active enjoyment there was the novelty of football, with its infinite possibilities to the beginner who had a hopeless duffer for contrast. Darragh was not wanting in pluck, but he simply could not play games. Then there were the long evenings, with Darragh to insinuate the congenial book. George's pose about "hating reading" had not for a moment deceived his younger companion, and Darragh, with a wider knowledge of books, seemed to know by instinct what George would like. They did not always agree about books, George being still keen about mere information and "the way things were done"; but they both liked Wordsworth and Tennyson. George found in them a response to his own feelings about nature, while Darragh had already begun to appreciate poetry for its own sake.

It was the same with music. Darragh could play the piano a little, and had for his age a wide acquaintance with the works of the great composers. He would spend hours at the piano in the cold half-lighted class-room, picking out from memory fragments of pieces that his mother played, and George,

who had no inclination to learn to play, was never tired of listening to him. One day Darragh fingered out a few bars of music that was different in kind from any music that George had ever heard. It seemed not to have been made, but to come out of nature, as if the hills were speaking. George eagerly asked what it was, and Darragh said, in a tone of awe, "Beethoven." The name meant nothing to George, but he made Darragh play the passage over and over again, and it haunted him for days. Over the dinner-table he would silently mouth at Darragh, "Beethoven," as if the name were a secret password between them. In after years George learned that the haunting passage, deep down on the piano, was the theme of the variations in the *Sonata Appassionata*.

In spite of his greater facility of expression and at least equal intelligence, Darragh deferred to George in almost everything. He seemed to recognize in him some general power that was above all talents, and his attitude sometimes reminded George of his own toward his father.

At Christmas George went home full of Darragh. He had already spoken of him in letters to his mother, of course; but George's power of conveying information on paper had not yet developed beyond

the stage of, "There is a new boy called Miles Darragh. He is a nice boy, and I like him." Now he talked about Darragh in and out of season. Walter and Amelia professed to be bored, but their mother encouraged George to talk about his friend. If he had only known, he was giving more of himself away than he had ever done before. Therefore his mother smiled, though still rather wistfully, while she listened. It is the common fate of mothers to get their confidences at second hand.

That Christmas George learned quite a lot about his father. Gardiner's field had been bought, and George was now convinced that his father derived his moral support from land. It was as if he were making provision against a siege. As they walked up the new field, George felt that his father was looking far ahead at a troubled horizon—very much as a Roman sentinel might have looked from the Camp at the debatable marches of the Severn. Politics to George was still only a matter of Blue and Yellow. He knew that his father was strongly Blue, or Conservative; but he got the impression that he was angry with his own side. What he said about neighboring landowners made George think of Esau and the mess of pottage. He did not know exactly what pottage was, but he knew

that his father was not a sneak, like Jacob. George believed that his father did not want land for himself, but to take care of it. He seemed to recognize some duty to the land that other people did not, though he only talked to George about the rotation of crops.

For the first week or two after he got back to St. Piran's George was a little worried about not knowing what he was going to be. He thought that perhaps he ought to hurry up, in case his father wanted him, and for a time the calling of the buoy was urgent. In his dreams it got mixed up with the voice of his father. But as the regular interests of school got hold of him again the mood passed, and then there was a new excitement to look forward to.

Mrs. Darragh wanted him to spend the Easter holidays with Miles. George wrote to his mother for permission. She gave it willingly, but one sentence in her letter puzzled him a little: "I like you to make friends, because then I know that you are happy." George would have said that you made friends in order to become happy, but he was in no mood for metaphysics, and then it became a matter of counting the days.

It was not until a few weeks before Easter that George thought of asking Darragh:

“Will anybody be there?”

“I expect Mary Festing will be there,” said Darragh.

The name sounded so natural on his lips that for a moment George forgot to be astonished. Then he felt disturbed. He hoped that Mary Festing would not have told Mrs. Darragh about the row in the nursery at Bourneside. It occurred to him that perhaps Mrs. Darragh might have written to his mother and said that Mary Festing would be there. He suspected a trap, and said rudely:

“Bother Mary Festing!”

“She’s not like other girls,” said Darragh mildly.

“No, that’s the worst of it,” said George gloomily, and then Darragh stared at him and said:

“Why, do you know Mary Festing?”

George felt himself beginning to blush, but he said carelessly:

“Oh, she stopped with some people we know. I thought her”—he searched for a word sufficiently remote from his feelings—“stuck up.”

Darragh began to laugh.

“I’ll tell her that,” he said.

"If you do I'll punch your head," said George furiously, and then added: "But I don't care."

Darragh told him not to get shirty about a girl.

"She's not at all a bad sort, really," he said, "and, anyhow, she'll be with my mother most of the time."

George remembered his manners and said no more, but he was half sorry that he had promised to go. Exactly what his grievance against Mary Festing was he could not have said. It was as if she made some sort of claim upon him.

"Anyhow," he thought, "I'll soon show her that I've grown up," and for the rest of the term he remembered to be a man of the world with all his might.

But when breaking-up day actually came, Mary Festing was only an infinitesimal part of the minor apprehensions which, mingling with George's delight at the prospect of sharing his holidays with Darragh in Cornwall, reduced him to his proper and attractive self as a rather bashful guest. The journey up through Cornwall, the country growing greener as they traveled eastward, as if they were meeting the spring, with Darragh to explain incidents by the way, the Druid-haunted hill of Carn Brea, the Cathedral growing up in hollow Truro,

and the unexpected sea on the right, between St. Austell and Par, was the very best preparation; and by the time they reached Camelford, George was nearer to his own world than he had been for some time.

Consequently he found himself shaking hands with Mrs. Darragh and Mary Festing on the platform at Camelford, without any settled plan of behavior. Before he remembered to be on guard, he found it wasn't necessary. He had never been so taken for granted; never so easily come home. Mrs. Darragh was just what he expected: tall, slender and gray-haired, with Miles' clear-cut features and low quivering voice. He had never met anybody so entirely without curiosity. Talking to her was like resuming a conversation begun in a dream. He would have known Mary by her eyes. She was now a lanky girl of about fifteen. George doubted if she really remembered him, though she said, "Oh, yes," when Mrs. Darragh said, "You know George, of course."

During the two-mile drive in a little wagonette, or "Jersey car," on a high road, over flat featureless country, with a gray wall of sea in front and Rough Tor and Brown Willy behind, Miles and Mary ragged in the healthiest manner, while Mrs.

Darragh talked to George about King Arthur's Castle. He noticed that Mary had a trick of screwing up her eyes when she laughed.

Presently they turned aside, and with a groaning of brakes, descended a hill into a wooded valley with a hidden stream. Directly he heard the stream George knew that he was going to be happy. Compared with the Bourne, it was like a person without a history; capricious, maybe, but innocent of any deeper meaning. When he saw the stream it was clear to the bed, with mock pools and glancing runs.

At a little bridge they got down from the Jersey car and carried their bags up to a small gray house looking down the rocky valley that framed a triangle of sea. To George it was like a house in a fairy tale; invented, and so, for all its wood and stream and vision of sea, a comment upon, rather than, like Bourneside, a genuine product of the soil. It was the very home of "Let's pretend."

Not that he found himself in an atmosphere of make-believe. On the contrary, he had never been among people who made so little distinction between what one felt and what one said. Over supper they talked about books and music, and whether primroses were friendlier than wood-anemones, as

if they were the really important things, while questions of what to wear, and the politics of school, were dismissed with a laughing word. The maid who waited upon them took part in the conversation, and Mrs. Darragh seemed the youngest there. George had to assure himself that though he could talk more easily to Mrs. Darragh, he loved his mother best.

What made it all the more easy was that, while his new friends took him for granted as belonging to their world, they paid him just that deference due to the completer schoolboy than Darragh. Even if he had remembered to talk like a man of the world it would not have been necessary. He was taken for granted in that character as much as any other.

Throughout the holidays, George was kept on the best of terms with himself. It was almost as if he were the man in the house. Whatever special efforts were made to entertain him were from that point of view—to provide him with rather more active amusements than the tastes of the household naturally inclined to. Darragh knew a few boys in Tintagel and Boscastle who were keen about cricket and fishing, and young enough to appreciate George's more professional training, at any rate in

the former. For the first time in his life he was regarded as a leader in athletic sports.

On the whole, however, he preferred the afternoons when the Darraghs, Mary and he just "oxed about"; climbing Brown Willy and Rough Tor, exploring the coast, or playing at Malory among the ruins of King Arthur's Castle. At the bottom of his heart he knew that he did not really care about cricket and fishing, and that his prowess therein would not have stood the test of his peers. It was not that he wanted to show off in playing up to the Darraghs' idea of him. If he had been capable of analyzing his feelings, he would have known that, well as he got on with Mary Festing, he still felt the necessity of impressing upon her that he was no longer a sappy kid. That it was necessary was proved by her trying to conceal the fact that she was a better swimmer than he. Not that she gave any sign of remembering the incident in the nursery, but it was better to be on the safe side.

Occasionally Mary said things that seemed to assume too close an acquaintance with his private motives. When he killed his first trout, while the others applauded, Mary looked at him instead of it and said: "You know you hate it." He understood her to mean the killing, and thereafter,

though he did hate the killing, Mary's disapproval of trout-fishing became the real reason for pursuing it. Mary would not even eat the trout he caught, and the arguments between her and Mrs. Darragh, who made no pretense of reconciling her appetite with her principles, over the breakfast-table became one of their jokes. Mrs. Darragh would say gravely:

"You'll not be caring for bacon, Mary?"

And Mary would answer, with perfect good-humor:

"Yes, please; a lot. I never loved that pig."

At the bottom of his heart, George knew that Mary was really the more consistent of the two, though he couldn't have worked it out.

Mary interested him against his will. She was full of fun in a sleepy sort of way, though generally grave in her manner. At this distance of time her outburst of temper seemed incredible. Even when she argued she spoke quietly and in very few words. Often when other people argued she said nothing, but screwed up her eyes instead. George could never quite believe that she was not really older and wiser than Mrs. Darragh. She seemed to have made up her mind about everything, though she seldom volunteered an opinion. He understood

that her parents, who had been friends of Mrs. Darragh in India, now lived in London, where Mary went to a day-school. It was not merely her presence here for the holidays that made him suspect that she did not get on very well with her parents, though she seemed happy enough. Once or twice she spoke of the Markhams, who had settled near London. George wanted to ask her about the Markhams, but decided that it was better to let well alone.

His uncomfortable memories of the nursery episode did not prevent his whole-heartedly joining in made-up games now. But that was different; they were all, even Mrs. Darragh, in the same boat; there was no *personal* association between him and Mary. Besides, he didn't invent the Round Table, and the neighborhood of the Castle was irresistible. It was true that all the authorities threw doubts on the identity of the place, but, as George said to Mrs. Darragh, "It *feels* like it." She laughed and said, "Stick to that and you'll come out all right." He did not understand what she meant, and it was one of the things that made him believe that, for all her childishness, Mrs. Darragh was wiser than she let on to be.

Their games in the Castle, though they did not

cause him any serious embarrassment, reminded him of the necessity for keeping Mary at a distance. She always wanted him to be Arthur. Not that she wanted to be Guinevere; on the contrary, she called Guinevere a treacherous pig, and pushed the part on to Mrs. Darragh. Her notion of a heroine was, as George recognized, out of perversity, Vivien, or, in more sincere moments, Iseult, "because she really couldn't help it." George asked why he must be Arthur. "I dunno," said Mary, screwing up her eyes, and biting a blade of grass, "you're like him, somehow."

George declared that Arthur was a softy. He would like to be Lancelot, and Mrs. Darragh said: "Sure and he shall, Mary, if I have a voice in the matter." At the bottom of his heart, George knew that he really wanted to be Arthur, softy though he undoubtedly was. Lancelot, with all his merits, was a bit of a swaggerer. But George was not going to let Mary see that he wanted to be Arthur, and he threw himself into the part of Lancelot, climbing to the most dangerous places, baring his battle-writhen arms, and groaning in remorseful pain, with all the more conviction because he knew that Mary despised the character.

As for Miles, he was content to be anybody:

the "moral child without the craft to rule," or Galahad, or even Percival; though Merlin's was the part he really preferred, because then he and Mary, as Vivien, could sharpen their wits at the expense of the others.

All the time George knew that their games were only a playful comment upon the real inspiration of the place, and that the others had the same feeling. The Path Perilous that joined the Head to the mainland, with Merlin's cave below, and the mock ruins with their postern were too good to be wasted; but real romance began when you came out upon the thrift-flushed plateau of the Head, where long grass quivered about the foundations of a little chapel with a broken altar.

Here they instinctively dropped their bantering and talked about real things. George generally found himself with Mrs. Darragh, and because she was not inquisitive, he gave her more of his confidence than he knew. She was greatly interested in his maps and plans. Evidently Miles had spoken about them, which struck George as rather surprising, considering that Miles was an artist. He himself could not say what he "meant" by his maps and plans; he only knew that he had to make them.

One day Mrs. Darragh asked him if he ever wanted to write stories. He said that he did not, and tried to explain why.

"It seems so silly to make things up, when it is all there, if you could only get at it."

His confidence in Mrs. Darragh was not quite easy enough to let him tell her about the Bourne and the Grove, but she seemed to understand what he meant.

"You mean in the feel of the place?" she said, artfully using his own expression.

"Yes," he said, and went on to say that he supposed the people who were able to write stories didn't notice the feel of places. They could make anything happen to anybody, anywhere. Though very often when he was reading a story, he could not help thinking that the real story was underneath, though mucked up by what was written over. Like one of those old — what did they call them?

"Palimpsests?" said Mrs. Darragh.

Yes, that was the word. Mrs. Darragh thought for a moment and then said:

"Some people can only live their stories."

That struck him as remarkably true. All at once he thought of quite a lot of people who seemed to be living their stories. His father, for example,

about politics and the land; and his mother, when she walked at the top end of the Garden, with a proud head, smiling.

“It doesn’t matter,” said Mrs. Darragh, “so long as it is their own story — the one underneath.”

He was afraid that she was getting at him, but she went on:

“Mary is going to be a writer; but she writes poetry.”

For the first time his feelings with regard to Mary Festing were tinged with something like jealousy — not of Mary, but of Miles. He could say what he felt in drawing and painting; Mary in poetry. They were probably doing it now on the other side of the Head. How easy it must be for them to get on together. It was not that he liked Mary particularly, or wanted Mary to like him; but it was tiresome always to be bluffing with her.

That feeling of jealousy, or rather, envy, was the little drop of bitter at the end of his holidays. Easily as he was taken for granted by his companions, he felt a difference between himself and them. If the word had been in his vocabulary, he would have said that, compared with them, he was inarticulate.

The only time when he forgot all about the

difference was when Mrs. Darragh played in the evening. Then all the barriers were swept away, and he felt as if the music were speaking for him. Particularly when Mrs. Darragh played Beethoven. He described it to himself as the music that was not made up, that came out of the ground. Sometimes when Mrs. Darragh played Beethoven he would catch Mary looking at him out of her narrow eyes. Then he always had to say something silly to put her off. He still felt that he owed Mary Festing one, and he knew that he would have to have it out with her some day; though what about he could not have said.

CHAPTER VII

FOR the next year or so George's life at St. Piran's was happy and uneventful. He was popular with his fellows, he got his removes automatically, and his reports continued to be encouraging. His friendship with Darragh persisted, growing firmer as the differences between the two boys were more clearly exposed. They could now quarrel and make it up again with a tacit allowance for each other's wrong-headed point of view. Darragh spent a week of the Christmas holidays at Bourneside, where the abject regard of the household for the artistic temperament gave George all the advantages of a showman; and George paid a summer visit to the Darraghs, where the absence of Mary Festing was both a relief and a slight disappointment — which he explained to himself by thinking of all the clever things he might have said and done to correct her mistaken idea of him. Affairs at Bourneside seemed to be flourishing. Mr. Tracy had been asked to become a magistrate, but had declined the honor; Walter was now in

the bank, and Amelia had been taken to tea with the duchess.

It was on the approach of his fifteenth birthday that George began to be troubled. For some reason or other, the memories of his childhood had waked up again and were stalking him. It was as if the Bourne had found its way at last into the Atlantic, and so into his heart again. Below the calling of the buoy he heard the thunder of the Waterfall; the dark tops of the fir-trees in the Grove made notes of interrogation upon the sky, and he was haunted by the shadow of his mother's face on the wall. He had strange impulses to write to his mother and tell her that he was an unworthy son; but when he sat down to write he did not know how to begin.

To complicate matters, he was being prepared for confirmation. With an acute sense of double personality, he felt that it was imperative that he should choose now between one and the other. Perhaps the sound of the Waterfall was the voice of God, and if he chose rightly the dark tops of the fir-trees would make the gesture of benediction.

But when he tried to choose there were appalling difficulties. If he succumbed to the calling of his old world and became as a little child again, he

would have to renounce his father's hopes for his future. It was incredible that they could be wrong in themselves. The fault was his in pretending to be cleverer than he was. It was not as if he had not been warned. He remembered Eleanor Markham's dissatisfaction at the idea of his going away to school; her "Be yourself, my dear boy"; his mother's remark about sticking up for his ideals; Mrs. Darragh's about living one's own story; and even Mary Festing's narrow glance at him when his heart was opened by music,—all came back to him with prophetic meaning. Yet he could not bring himself to write: "Father, I have sinned." And when he tried to put his difficulties before the Head, who was preparing him for confirmation, he was told that they were natural at his age, and would probably disappear at his first communion.

"I may say that I am very well pleased with what I hear of your work, Tracy," said the Head, with benign aloofness.

George felt that they were at cross-purposes, but he did not like to set up his opinion against the Head's, and he went home silently hoping for the best.

He was to make his first communion at Easter. His preoccupied manner was naturally put down

to the solemnity of the occasion, and everybody, even his father, was particularly kind to him. George would not presume to judge his father, but he could not help wondering if his own troubles were not partly due to the fact that his parents were divided about religion. He had never heard them quarrel, or even argue, about the subject, but the division was there. As he walked with his mother in the early morning along the road beside the Bourne, below the hanging wood where, over dead Romans, the dawn sang, "He is risen!" through the fir-trees, George humbly prayed that, even as the noble dead were absolved by that harmony, so in time his father might be brought to the altar.

When the communion drew near, and he knelt between his mother and Amelia among primroses at the chancel rails, George derived peculiar comfort from the masculinity of Mr. Mostyn. His large boots, peeping from under his alb, were an assurance that there was no essential incompatibility between the world of reality and the world of affairs. Then, too, Tom Burchell was the server. George tried not to notice these facts, but they entered into the hope that the union, so often hinted in this place, between the two sides of his

nature might be consummated by the act of communion.

During the interval after receiving the wafer, his faculties, hypnotized by the gesture and the murmured words of the priest, were in abeyance; and he knelt with closed eyes, hardly daring to breathe. But when he felt between his lips the thin rim of the chalice, and then his tongue responded to the pungent flavor of the wine, he was aware of a phenomenon that he hoped was not profane in its associations. As a child he had been shown a simple experiment in galvanism. You placed a pointed piece of zinc between the upper teeth and lip, and a penny on the tongue, and, at the moment of contact between the two metals, whether the eyes were open or closed, there was a faint flash, felt rather than seen, and a sharp saline taste. So now, at the moment of communion, there was a faint flash before his closed eyes, and he saw God.

The miracle had happened, and George returned to his place with uplifted heart. He was one with the whole creation, and he understood now that his doubts and fears proceeded from the weakness of his faith. Always ready to believe in the superiority of other people, he now felt that what

he had put down to complacency on their part was in reality due to knowledge. He thought with humble reverence of the wise Head, and when Mr. Mostyn and Tom Burchell caught up his party as they moved along the high path above the vicarage garden, and Mr. Mostyn began to tease Amelia about her long legs, while Tom asked him what he had been doing at football, he admired their freedom. Coming from that mystery, on that morning of all the year, they could talk lightly, because they were at ease in the courts of Zion.

The mood of exalted humility persisted throughout the holidays. He felt like Galahad, whose strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure. The world, that he had found disturbing, was now become the garment of God. He heard Him in the Waterfall, and when he walked in the Grove the dark tops of the fir-trees made the gesture of benediction upon the sky. It was no longer necessary for him to choose between the two sides of his nature; he had found the larger synthesis in the love of God.

To put the finishing touch to his happiness, his father now began to talk to him explicitly about his future. At least explicitly as far as to make George understand that his was to be what in the

slang of the stage is called a "thinking part." The immediate objective was to be the bar. Not, as Mr. Tracy was careful to explain, for the more practical purposes of a profession, but as a clearing-house for further advancement. George had the haziest notions about what one did at the bar, but he thought of it as a sort of pen or enclosure — something between the agricultural show and the left-luggage office at Barstow station — where bewigged and brilliant young men waited their turn to be called as judges, cabinet ministers, ambassadors, or colonial governors.

"But everything depends on your doing well at St. Piran's and Oxford," said his father. "As you know, my own education was neglected, and I don't want you to be handicapped in the same way. I have no particular desire for you to go to the university merely for the sake of going there — if you understand what I mean. I should like you to go up with a scholarship — not so much for the sake of saving money as to give you a good position — and I gather from the Headmaster that this is well within your powers."

George said that he would work hard to gain a scholarship.

"I am sure you will," said his father. "I don't

know much about these matters, but it seems to me that the whole thing is summed up in the word 'distinction.' Unless a university degree really carries distinction—'Honors,' I think they call it—it is nothing more than a sort of social certificate. It is difficult to explain exactly what I mean," he went on rather pathetically, "but personally I would rather that a young man stood upon his own merits than upon a qualification that means nothing more than so many years at a seat of learning. As for the moral discipline, gentlemen ought to be made at home."

George was very much more interested when his father talked about general ideas than when he discussed the details of education. Young as he was, he felt that his father's ideas were sounder than his knowledge, and that they were more and more worth listening to as the subject grew wider and more difficult.

"From what I can make out," Mr. Tracy went on, "we shall want all the good men we can get. There are changes coming all round. I see it in business, and I see it—here," he indicated the landscape generally, for they were walking in the Orchard. "It is foolish to sit down and grumble. There's a new race, very sharp and able, but with-

out principles or tradition. And the people with principles and tradition have become frivolous. Or they scold at the newcomers like a lot of old women. What we want to do is to sit tight and say nothing. That is to say, most of us, leaving a few picked men to skirmish in front. There's a division of labor, you see. People like old Walter and myself are not much good with our heads, except for business, but we can hold the fort. And we can supply the ammunition. However," he said, with a laugh, as he tucked George's arm into his, "I'm talking too much ahead. But I do want you to feel, my boy," he added shyly, "that every one of us owes a duty to his country."

It was all tremendously exciting to George, though he could not help feeling that the part which most concerned himself, about skirmishing in front, was rather vague. It was true that he preferred playing forward to back at football, but then the ball was a definite object to go for. But holding the fort conveyed a clear and inspiring picture to his mind. It was what he had always felt about his father, and it connected him with the dead Romans upon the Camp. They also had held the fort. The hint of willing sacrifice in the words about supplying ammunition brought tears

of gratitude into George's eyes, though it also reminded him of his great responsibility. He wondered if old Walter knew and acquiesced in the division of labor. It comforted him to remember that old Walter always preferred playing back at football; he had acquired quite a reputation as a goal-keeper.

Inspired by the feeling of a new harmony, and by the vague though stimulating prospect of skirmishing in front, George went back to St. Piran's and flung himself into work and play with renewed ardor. He was now looked upon as a boy who would almost certainly do something. If he had been present at the conversations in the masters' common room, it might have struck him as significant that, while the man responsible for each part of his education expressed satisfaction with his progress therein, his private opinion was that Tracy's real talent was for something else. The rivalry was now inverted, in the sense that each man thought that the others were insufficiently aware of the splendid material at their command. Something of this came to George, in stray remarks and questions, and he sometimes had the uncomfortable feeling that one master was using him to find out something disparaging about an-

other. This offended his notions of honor, but he did not connect the circumstance with any peculiarity in himself.

The only thing that caused him any concern was a slight though increasing difference in his relations with Darragh. They were not less friendly than before, but the development of their respective interests would not allow such close companionship as formerly. Nobody bothered about Darragh at work or play. He was now accepted as the sort of boy who must be allowed to pass through school by a series of loopholes between one officially recognized activity and another. From the scholastic point of view he was a failure, though his general intelligence and sweet nature, as well as his witty tongue and now remarkable artistic talent, kept him from being despised. Sometimes when George was tired, or over-excited, or perplexed by what he could only regard as an unwholesome curiosity on the part of the masters, he envied Darragh the protective atmosphere created by his one shining gift and blessed incapacity in everything else. Particularly since, as time went on, George began to feel that the progress that kept him in the public eye was due to general enthusiasm, rather than to special aptitude for

this or that particular task. It was a sort of Dutch courage that was carrying him on.

Not that he doubted the reality of his inspiration, though this, again, drew him a little further from Darragh. On his visits to Darragh's home, he had noticed that Mrs. Darragh did not go to church, but his own religious instincts being then unawakened, he had not attached particular importance to the fact. During his week at Bourneside, Darragh had gone to church with the others as a matter of course. It was a shock to George to learn that Darragh had been brought up without any religious convictions. This, perhaps, would not have permanently disturbed him if it had not been that Darragh, evidently with his mother's approval, was prepared to submit to the religious discipline of St. Piran's, even to the length of being confirmed when his turn came. He said it didn't matter.

George did not wish to judge, but he could not help showing his uneasiness. He spoke bashfully of the strength and the feeling of brotherhood he derived from communion.

"But I feel that every time I eat bread and butter," said Darragh. "I don't mean that I think about it fresh every time, but the feeling is always there."

"But don't you believe in God?" said George.

"I suppose I do," said Darragh. "I've never really thought about it. My mother says that only silly and priggish people want to invent another word for — all this, you know," for they were sitting on the sand-hills overlooking the estuary. "Like not calling yourself English because you happen to be Irish," he added.

The illustration did not strike George as a very good one, but he was not prepared to argue. He felt that Darragh's easy pantheism was wrong somewhere, but when he tried to find the weak spot he could only fall back on his own limited experience.

"Well," he said, "if I didn't believe that it was all true — in just that way — I don't think I could keep on trying."

"No, perhaps not," said Darragh, and then looked uncomfortable.

"What do you mean?" said George.

"Oh — nothing," said Darragh, though, as George saw, he was half inclined to unburden himself.

"Go on," said George sternly. "I don't mind your beastly cheek, and, anyhow, I shall kick you if you don't."

"Of course it's awful cheek of me," said Darragh nervously, "but it's just that about trying —"

"We're not all lazy Irishmen," said George, though he felt vaguely disturbed.

"Oh, of course, I know that your people want it, and all that," said Darragh, "but you don't seem to me to be that sort."

"What sort?"

"Well — scholarships and things," said Darragh, wriggling with unaccustomed embarrassment. "Look at Philpot and Greaves."

"Oh, I know I ain't as clever as Philpot and Greaves," said George.

"Don't be an ass," said Darragh; "you know you're a lot cleverer. At least, clever is not the right word." He dug furiously in the sand, and then added in a low tone, "You're too big to be clever — in that way, Tracy."

"Oh, it's all jolly fine for you," said George, mollified by the hero-worship. "You know what you can do, and you don't want to do anything else. I've got to find out what I'm good for; and wouldn't it be rather cheek of me to say what is the best way of finding out?"

He knew that it was plausible rather than sincere, but Darragh did not continue the argument.

That was the worst of Darragh; he made you feel insincere by just looking. George often felt that his affection for Darragh was not very far from hate. It was odd that all the people he liked best seemed to have the same effect upon him.

After that he kept Darragh at a little distance. He persuaded himself that the reason was Darragh's unsatisfactory point of view about religion, and he derived comfort from the fact that Darragh was Irish. The Irish were naturally a disloyal people, lacking in what might be called the public-school spirit. In his heart George knew that Darragh was not dangerous to his faith in religion or in the wisdom of his elders, but to his faith in himself. He would not have admitted that part of his ambition was now to "show Darragh."

During the summer holidays, George was conscious of keeping the subject of Darragh in the background. One day, his mother said to him:

"Are you and Darragh as great friends as ever?"

"Of course we are, mother," he said rather stiffly.

"You do not speak of him so much as you did," said his mother.

"Oh, you can't be always talking about the same

person," said George. "Besides," he added, "as you get moved up, you get more into different sets. Darragh's a good chap, but he isn't really a swotter, and he's no good at games. But we see a lot of each other in between."

His mother's curiosity irritated him. He said to himself that, if she only knew, she would be the first to discourage his friendship with Darragh. He had said nothing to her about Darragh's lack of religion. Partly because, though he couldn't explain it, he felt that it was not really lack of religion, and partly because he was afraid that his mother might take the matter too seriously. Women could not let well alone. For one thing, she ought to be glad that he did not let himself get too fond of Darragh and his mother. In his heart he believed that she was glad, and that was why she asked questions.

"You see, mother," he said, "of course, I like the Darraghs awfully, but they're not really our sort. They only care about books and pictures and music."

"That's why I'm glad they are your friends," she said. "We are all so ignorant about things like that."

"Oh, mother, don't be silly," he said, kissing

her. "You know that I wouldn't swap you for all the clever people in the world."

She remained silent for a few moments, smiling to herself, and then said with adorable shyness:

"You know, George, sometimes I think that you ought to have been a poet."

That was too far from probability to cause embarrassment, and George roared with laughter.

"You'd better tell the pater that," he said, "and see how he'll look. Or I'll go up to the Head and say: 'Please, sir, my mother wants me to be a poet.'"

"Never mind," said his mother good-humoredly, "I know what I mean."

He continued to tease her, making up doggerel about different members of the family. But though the conversation only amused him at the time, afterward it caused him some concern. Not because he thought his mother was right, but because her remark reminded him of the division between his parents. It was an old belief of his that his mother managed his father. Although it was his father who made plans for his future, it was his mother who started the idea of his going up to Oxford; and he shrewdly suspected that, once having got him there, she would not care very much whether

he followed his father's plans or not. Women were like that; they did not seem to have any sense of honor. Mrs. Darragh's disingenuous advice to her son about religion was only another example of the same defect.

The result was to deepen George's feeling of loyalty to his father. More and more he was learning to admire the quiet man who, as he got older, was growing gentler and more affectionate, though never demonstrative, to his own family, and rather more reserved to the world outside. It was always as if he saw danger ahead, and were silently making preparations to hold the fort. To the Bourneside estate was now added a strip of low-lying gardens, with two cottages, between the nearer end of the Orchard and the Bourne, so that Mr. Tracy was now, in the technical sense, a landlord. He seemed to derive peculiar satisfaction from improving the comfort of his tenants, though he was not a man to care for popularity.

George encouraged Walter to talk about their father. Walter had a tremendous regard for him as a man of business, and George gathered that, in the affairs of the bank, he stood for a certain inflexibility of principle. He was a bold speculator, but he would never take risks that could not be

stated clearly on paper. Often there were differences on this account between him and his partners, who were inclined to listen to the blandishments of the new element in business. Walter did not put these things very clearly to George, but the latter, to his own slight astonishment, found himself reading between the lines. Sometimes he felt that, if he only knew the terms, he would have understood business better than old Walter, whose usual comment was, "Presently there will be no gentlemen left in business"; and there were moments when he even regretted that he was not going into the bank. There was a thrill, a romance about the transactions that Walter spoke of, that the real business men seemed to miss.

It puzzled George that Walter did not seem to see anything in their father's passion for land. He regarded it as an amiable weakness, a sort of hobby, to be welcomed in its results as increasing the family importance. With the extended social opportunities of manhood, Walter was getting quite keen about the family importance; he had become a member of the Cleeve Tennis Club and wanted his father to get him a commission in the Volunteers. George, who cared nothing about the family importance, refused to believe that his

father's interest in land was only a hobby; he observed that when his father spoke of dishonest or incompetent people in business he did so with quiet contempt, but that bad landlords made him really angry. George felt that if anybody tried to cheat his father in business, he would stand up for his rights in a legal way, but that any attempt to meddle with his land would arouse the sacred fury that he himself had felt when Tom Burchell broke his flower.

But when in an expansive moment George suggested to Walter that their father regarded Bourneside as a sort of trust in the service of his country, Walter laughed and called him an old romancer.

"You always did want to drag in some outlandish idea or other," he said.

The remark reminded George of the scene with Mary Festing in the nursery. Really, when he thought of it, his father's regard for his tenants was rather like his own inexplicable feelings about the Servians. Lest Walter should remember the same episode, he hastily changed the subject to another one of greater safety.

But he felt a secret satisfaction when, on Walter's broaching the subject of a commission in the Cleeve Rifles, his father said:

“ Well, personally, I would rather you went into the Yeomanry.”

Walter looked dissatisfied, and Amelia said: “ But it’s such an awful uniform.” And George, to his amusement, saw by Walter’s face that the same objection was in his mind.

“ Just as you like, pater,” said Walter, “ only, of course, there will be the expense of a horse —”

“ And besides,” said Amelia, “ the Yeomanry officers are such a lot of chaw-bacons. Fancy having old Burchell for a captain.”

Mr. Tracy laughed good-humoredly, but, as George observed, rather shyly.

“ You’d better please yourself,” he said to Walter. “ Remind me to speak to Colonel Fossett about it to-morrow.”

All the time George was yearning to show his sympathy with his father. He saw perfectly well that his father, like himself, would not betray himself to people who did not understand. Of course, he wanted Walter to go into the Yeomanry, because the Yeomanry represented the land, and George felt with elation that if he had been the subject, his father would have told him the reason. He had found the right word for his father; he was an idealist.

CHAPTER VIII

UNFORTUNATELY, the larger view of life that George took back to St. Piran's did not help him with his immediate problems. Definite association with the classical side, and close contact with born scholars, compelled him to recognize that classics were not really his game. His native powers only took him as far as the understanding of principles; when once he saw the way things went, or worked, his curiosity declined. If he had thought of the distinction, he would have said that he cared for syntax, but not for grammar. His mind pulled up short before anything like an arbitrary rule, and he had the sort of memory that, as if by some instinct of self-preservation for its proper function, refuses to be burdened with a verbal cargo. He did not really love literature for its own sake, and when once he knew what was in a book he did not particularly want to read it. He felt that he already possessed it.

He worked hard, but he knew that he was forcing his mind over obstacles and not, like Philpot and

Greaves, his nearest rivals, taking them in the stride of a genuine impulse for learning. It was only the large general impulse derived from the sense of a new harmony within his nature, and the desire to please his father, that enabled him to keep abreast of them.

What made it all the more galling was the conviction of real though undefined ability. He did not need Darragh to tell him that Philpot and Greaves were not his intellectual superiors. Yet he could not have said honestly that he would have done better if he had been entered on the modern side. The same defects would have hindered him there. As when he made machines that wouldn't work in the nursery at Bourneside, his curiosity flagged with the understanding of principles.

It was just the same in the playing-field. He was the alternate hope and despair of the captain of the school eleven.

"Tracy goes in," he said, "and you say: 'There's a man who bats with his head.' But the moment he gets the hang of the bowling, it's all over. It isn't that he gets cock-sure; he loses interest in what he's doing. He seems to think that cricket is a sort of Euclid. You can see him saying 'Q.E.D.,' and the next thing is *Nunc Dimit-*

tis, and out he comes, grinning all over his face as if he'd done something clever."

George could not explain why he caved in at the wrong moment. He really wanted to distinguish himself at work and play. He could and did play up for his side, but he always knew when he was doing it. Fellows who really played up for their side couldn't help it, though they might make a virtue of necessity afterward. He said to himself that it would be all right when he got to the bar. The worst of it was, he had begun to doubt if the course mapped out by his father was the best way to get there. Sensitive to words, he began to associate the bar of his father's conversation with the bar of the estuary. His whole nature responded to the urgent summons of the buoy, but before he could launch out into the sea of affairs he must get over the bar. It was the intervening channel that bothered him. As he watched the coasters going down from Trenavore, the little smoky port above St. Piran's, he thought that possibly in a figurative sense he drew too much water. He was not conceited, but Darragh's "too big to be clever" had fatally stuck. The tide that served Philpot and Greaves was too shallow for him; or the impulse derived from his native powers

ran into too many side channels of speculation or backwaters of dreaming. Moreover, he had no pilot. His masters were trained to vessels of a certain draught; his father frankly did not know the shoals and sand-banks of learning; and after all, it was his mother and not his father who had first proposed the channel. He could trust his father as a deep-sea pilot; once at the bar he would be all right, and then, looking at the far horizon that now flashed with such enchanting though undefined possibilities, he began to wonder whether, after all, the bank wouldn't have done as well for his father's purpose as the bar.

The practical result of these fantastic speculations, which, nevertheless, he knew to be prompted by reality, was that his reports began to be discouraging. The judgment, suspended for so long, gradually recorded itself in vaguely disappointed comments by one master and another, and a general expression of concern by the Head. Mr. Tracy was too far out of his depth to interpret the signs correctly, but his reading of the last report was conveyed in the nervous remark, "You really are working, old man?"

George could honestly assure his father that he was. The very kindness of the question sapped

his courage to say: "But it's no good." He went back to St. Piran's as to a forlorn hope. At mid-term he was called up to an interview with the Head. In spite of his distress, George recognized with grim amusement that the Head's conception of his case was very much less clear than his own. The Head was a small man, with delicate features, a large round forehead and a wide silky beard. He always reminded George of the picture of Harun-al-Raschid in the Moxon Tennyson. He ought to have worn a scimitar. By instinct a scholar, he created an atmosphere of great personal dignity by moving slowly and speaking seldom; but on occasions like the present one he sought to inspire confidence by adopting a man-of-the-world attitude, expressed in the use of slang and by leaning with crossed legs against the arm of his chair — which made him look more Oriental than ever.

"You know, Tracy," he said, after preliminaries about the prospects of the school eleven, "you'll have to do better than this if you mean to get a scholarship."

"I know that, sir," said George pathetically. The answer, as he saw directly, gave the wrong impression. The Head looked at him sharply through his round glasses and said:

"Well, why don't you pull yourself together?"

That struck George as really illuminating. If only he could bring the whole of himself to bear upon the tasks of the moment! He tried to explain his difficulties, conscious all the time that it sounded as if he were excusing himself for laziness.

"It seems to me, Tracy," said the Head dryly, "that you can do anything you like."

"That's just it, sir," said George eagerly. "It's because I can do it that I can't. I mean," he added confusedly, "I don't feel as if I must do it."

The Head looked at him for a moment, and then said politely:

"There's nothing the matter with your health, Tracy, I trust?"

"Indeed, sir, no," said George hastily, "I'm as fit as a fiddle."

That was true. He was now a well-grown boy of seventeen, broad-shouldered and clear-colored.

"Since when," said the Head, "have you discovered that scholarships are to be won by inner compulsion?"

"I've known it all my life, sir," said George in a burst of candor, and then, seeing an ironical smile curving the beard before him, he added: "Look at Darragh, sir."

“Darragh?” said the Head, momentarily puzzled, and then, indifferently: “Oh, Darragh. But what has Darragh to do with your working for a scholarship?”

“Nothing, sir,” said George, though he felt that Darragh’s opinion on the subject was worth quoting. “But what I mean is that Darragh draws well because he can’t help it.”

“Darragh undoubtedly has a great natural gift,” conceded the Head judicially. “I haven’t observed, Tracy,” he continued, “anything that could be called evidence of genius in any department of your work that has come under my notice. You are just the ordinary boy of good general abilities.”

“Oh, of course I know that, sir,” said George, overcome with confusion at seeming to claim special consideration. “But —”

“But,” continued the Head, waving him to silence, “you have some natural advantages which many boys — and men — might envy. You are in excellent health, and you have, I understand, an all-round aptitude for the games that the experience of several generations in our leading schools has proved to play a by no means unimportant part in the preparation for the race of life. Indeed, the

tendency nowadays is perhaps to lay too much stress upon this aspect of education. However, I may say, Tracy, that I have never ceased to regret my own lack of proficiency in field sports; and some of your nearest companions"—George knew he meant Philpot and Greaves—"are undoubtedly handicapped, whether by defective vision or other bodily disabilities, as you are not. Yet they do not complain."

"Oh, please, sir, don't think I'm grumbling," said George, now thoroughly reduced to a sense of his own unworthiness.

"I'm glad to hear it," said the Head with genial irony. "You see, Tracy," he continued, "our public-school system is not the product of yesterday or of hasty generalization. It has been slowly and almost automatically formed through several centuries upon close and untiring observation, by not altogether despicable intellects, of every sort of boy. Exceptions due to special talents there must always be, but, even so, the system is elastic enough to insure their preservation, with such cultivation of the general powers as will fit the subject to take a dignified place in life. Your friend Darragh is an example. I do not think he will suffer in his career as an artist by reason of his years at St.

Piran's. As I said, you are not in any way exceptional — except, perhaps, by a fortunate balance of bodily and mental powers, manifestly in your favor in the emulation for honors designed, I may say, not for morbid intellectual development, but for such attainment in certain carefully selected branches of learning as is within the capacity of the good average mind. I trust that the next few months will show that you have made proper use of your advantages.”

Feeling strangely emptied of identity, George turned to go, but, as if touched by his crestfallen appearance, the Head added kindly:

“I may say, Tracy, that all the time you have been here your general conduct has been found to be excellent. I say this the more gladly because your conversation to-day reminds me that when you came to me to be prepared for confirmation I observed a slight tendency to — ah — priggishness. That will never do,” he said, with a smile and a great air of worldliness. “Play the game, Tracy, but leave others to determine the rules.”

At the time, George was as willing to believe that he was a prig as anything else. He blushed and stammered something about not meaning to be, and the Head, still smiling, continued:

“There’s just one other thing, Tracy. Your friendship with Darragh. Don’t think I wish to discourage it. On the contrary, such friendships between men of different temperaments can not fail to be beneficial to both concerned, and I happen to know that you have more than once shielded your friend from the inconveniences that a perhaps over-sensitive nature may suffer in the healthy give-and-take of a public school. That is as it should be; but it is necessary to remember that Darragh is exceptional, and that what, in view of his special talent and chosen career, may be virtues — the love of imaginative literature and the habit of — ah — esthetic speculation — are not desirable for you to imitate. You, I take it, are cut out for the more active exercises of the intellect. Share your hours of recreation with Darragh; but do not seek to model yourself upon him.”

Evidently convinced that he had gone into George’s case very thoroughly, the Head patted him on the shoulder and added, as a last word:

“We expect great things of you, Tracy. If you are in any difficulty — I don’t mean with regard to questions that may safely be left to older heads, but with regard to your actual work — come to me.”

At the time George felt only remorse. He was a prig, an upstart, a slacker — a complete rotter, as he phrased it to himself. But when he had recovered from the immediate effect of the Head's flowing periods, he began to question the facts. He might be a rotter; but he wasn't the precise kind of rotter the Head supposed him to be. He had no quarrel with the public-school system; he had never thought about it. What he wanted to know was how to get all of himself into his work.

It was all his own fault for attempting to go in for a scholarship. If he didn't know what he was, he knew now what he wasn't. There were enough examples round him for comparison. He was not, like Philpot and Greaves, a scholar; he was not, like other boys he could name, in the technical sense a sportsman; he was not, like Darragh, an artist. He could have kept his end up in any of these phases of activity, but keeping your end up simply wasn't good enough.

Convinced that nobody could help him, George faced his troubles in a philosophical spirit. He would give the scholarship a fair chance. At the end of the summer term his report showed a slight improvement — in detail; but George, with a new sense of maturity, was not deceived. He had put

on a spurt, but he had not got second wind. When you got second wind you were not conscious of trying. He did not cease to try, but he knew that he was now at the end of his resources and matched with specialists. At Christmas, his report said that it was doubtful whether without a great effort he would stand any chance of the scholarship.

Mr. Tracy, though disappointed, took the report in a practical spirit.

"Well," he said, "it's no use bothering about that. I've no reason to suppose that you haven't done your best."

George admired his father for instinctively seeing the futility of "special efforts". He believed that if his father had only known the rules of the game in educational matters, he would have been a better guide than the Head. He did not even feel it necessary to assure his father that he had done his best.

Mr. Tracy proposed that he should remain at St. Piran's for another year, and then go up to Oxford, "in the ordinary way." George felt that now or never was the time to speak out, and without a very clear idea of what he was proposing, he said:

"Am I good enough for the bank?"

Mr. Tracy stared at him for a moment, and then said, with a short laugh:

“Good enough? But it strikes me as rather a waste.”

George misunderstood him, and began to say how sorry he was that he had let his father in for all the expense of a public school. But Mr. Tracy said:

“That is not what I mean, my dear boy. You couldn't be expected to know until you tried, and, anyhow, I shall never regret that you went to St. Piran's. No, but I think you're fit for something better than the bank.”

George recognized that it was no time for modesty and he said:

“Well, if I am, I believe I can find it out as well there as anywhere else.” He thought that it would be cheek to add, “Look at you,” but that was what he was thinking.

The idea of the bank was evidently new to Mr. Tracy, but he did not seem displeased. After thinking for a moment, he said, almost apologetically:

“But have you considered the sacrifice?”

“Yes, pater, I've thought of all that,” said George with more haste than truth. “I know that

I should have a ripping time at Oxford, as I have had at St. Piran's, but at the end of it there would only be the same trouble over again. I'm not really cut out for anything to do with books. Of course," he added rather sheepishly, "I don't know what I am good for, but I'm certain it isn't that. I've proved it."

Mr. Tracy smiled at the boy's earnestness, but he was impressed, and after putting the case for the bank in the least attractive colors, he finally agreed that George should leave St. Piran's at the end of the next term.

George felt all the advantages of dealing with a practical mind. But he had not reckoned with his mother. From her remarks he could not make out whether her ambition for him was mainly social or whether she really believed that he was cut out for intellectual distinction; but she was bitterly disappointed at the change of plan. To his grief, she pounced upon Darragh as the explanation.

"I believe he is jealous of you because he is not going to Oxford himself," she said.

George was too honest to deny that Darragh had helped him to recognize his unfitness for scholarship, and, unfortunately, in trying to make his mother see exactly how Darragh had influenced

him, he said something about Darragh's religious ideas. That set her talking about the godlessness of artistic people in general. She wished she had known before she allowed George to spend his holidays with Darragh. George thought it was all horribly unjust — particularly since his mother had once said that she thought he ought to have been a poet. The result was to make him feel that he could give her less of his confidence than ever. Particularly since, though she did not actually say so, he knew that she was blaming his father for giving in to him. Mr. and Mrs. Tracy were not in the habit of discussing their differences before their children, but George observed that his father was going about rather like a baited bull.

In after years George recognized that he got more good out of his last term at St. Piran's than all the preceding ones. Released from what he felt to be a false position, he was able to enjoy the spirit of the place in all its aspects. Half consciously he formulated one of the first axioms in his philosophy of life: that you got good out of things in proportion as you didn't use them for any ulterior purpose — perhaps a more direct interpretation of the real advantages of a public school than the Head would have been willing to

subscribe to. The odd thing was that George didn't get slack at his work, and he saw with amusement that his masters were now convinced that he had been malingering. He himself could not have explained why it was, but the moment a thing ceased to be expected of him it became attractive.

It was as if he had come back to St. Piran's with his Bourneside personality, and in spite of his real anxiety to taste life, he wished he could have had his school-days all over again under the new conditions. Half of him had never properly enjoyed St. Piran's, and what remorse he felt was with regard to his recaptured self rather than to the place. Possibly his mother's denunciation of Darragh had something to do with it, for he felt that he owed the survival of himself to Darragh. With the injustice of youth, he did not reflect that his mother had an earlier claim than Darragh to the self he now redeemed. For some reason her approaches had always frightened him, and if there is one thing true of confidence, it is, "Ask, and it shall not be given." Certainly the Head's warning brought him nearer to Darragh. George knew that he had never modeled himself on Darragh; the truth being that, through all his efforts to play the game required of him, Darragh

had kept him in sight of possibilities which, in some way as yet unexplained, represented his real effectiveness.

His feeling to Darragh was now gratitude, enhanced by the misunderstanding with his mother. Fortunately, she had not been foolish enough to forbid the friendship, and George was now experiencing the inevitable sadness of divided affection. He loved his mother, not less, but in a different way; he was willing to give her anything but the one thing she implicitly asked.

Everything conspired to keep his last term at St. Piran's on an emotional plane. Darragh was leaving at the end of the year to go to an art school in London, and so there was a double future to discuss, with all the possibilities of meeting in fresh, and, on one side, romantic circumstances. George's immediate future could not be called romantic, but Darragh seemed to think he had chosen wisely. He put it in a phrase: "You are banking yourself."

Also, it was spring. In this remote corner of England, where the earth smiled even in her winter sleep, the awakening was lovelier for delay. As yet, the signs were faint and few: willows broke silver, elm buds thickened and reddened, and there

was a milky splash of primroses in the gray ash-grove behind the church on the sand-hills. No longer urgent with heavy weather, the buoy called faintly over a sea that flushed and paled with hues of promise. To George, remembering other springs as if after an interval of distraction, it seemed that his two landscapes had come together and made friends. He walked free in both, dreaming of the Grove in the bare mystery of the hills, and beyond the calling of the buoy he heard the steady purring of the Waterfall. Veiled by the sound heard, the sound remembered was lighter in rhythm, and what had been "Doom!" became "Destiny!" The question remained, and with hope was mingled regret. Never again would he know spring to the calling of the buoy.

The impression that George left behind him at St. Piran's was that of an attractive youth who, out of some perversity, had flung away a brilliant future. At a last interview, the Head talked to him very gravely.

"Nothing in this world, Tracy," he said, "can be done without trying. Life is a series of efforts, and the reason is not always plain. You have good powers, but there is a strain of what I can only

call fatalism in your character which you should guard against at all costs."

George listened all the more respectfully because the Head had presented him with a convenient word. What the Head called fatalism he had hitherto described to himself as the knack of seeing when it was no go. Like the Irishman who fought a duel as the result of mixing up anchovies with capers, he felt inclined to cry: "That's what I meant, sir!" But he doubted if the Head would understand, and he knew that he couldn't explain without a lot about machinery and the line of least resistance, so he said nothing. In passing, it struck him as funny that anybody who looked so Oriental as the Head should object to fatalism.

CHAPTER IX

AT first George did not know whether to be glad or sorry when his father told him that he was to be broken in at the London branch of the bank, instead of in Barstow. He appreciated what he supposed to be the intention; his father wished to spare him the humiliation of seeming a failure among people who knew him. Also there was his mother to be considered. The first reason would not have weighed with George; having chosen, he was prepared to "stick it out" to the last consequences; but he recognized the wisdom of the second. His mother would not say any more, but his immediate presence at home could not fail to be irritating to her. For some reasons, George was a little disappointed at the idea of going to London. His renewed sense of identity made him eager to revive the associations of Bourneside. He could not have said why, but he could never bring himself to believe that his own story was to be lived anywhere else. He belonged to the Bourne as if, on that night of arrival, when

he had first awakened to a personal existence, he had been actually plucked from its waters. But, after all, London was London, and in a few months there would be Darragh.

George's first impressions of London were influenced by the company of his father and a preliminary study of the map. They arranged themselves upon a groundwork of the Thames, first encountered at Maidenhead, and two long roads, all aiming east and converging upon the city, where, in addition to the London branch of Burroughs, Tracy & Co., were St. Paul's Cathedral, the Bank of England and the Tower. Somewhere between the two long roads, which went through many adventures under different names before they reached their destination, was Hyde Park, and somewhere upon the Thames was Westminster. One of the long roads passed near Paddington, and the true meaning of Paddington was indicated by the fact that the station where you gave up your ticket before arriving was called Westbourne Park. It was many years before George really took in the fact that London extended north and south as well as east and west. A sort of mental astigmatism, induced by poring over the map in the train under a strong sense of the direction in which he

was traveling, made all the horizontal lines clear and important and left all the vertical ones a little out of focus. When he unpacked his bag, it gave him a slight shock of surprise to find that the needle of his compass pointed across his mental picture of London. That night he dreamed that he was trying to twist the needle round against the current of the Bourne, while Mary Festing looked at him out of her narrow eyes and said, "It's no good; you can't stop in London," and he woke with a slight headache.

Mr. Baldwin, the manager of the London branch, had found lodgings for George in Earl's Court. The exact address was 19, Cardigan Square, Earl's Court Road, W. The lady of the house was called Mrs. Dove. She was the widow of a doctor, and had lost her little all in a bank smash. "So it seems like Providence, your coming here," she said to George. Particularly, she added, because Earl's Court was on gravel, and George supposed her to mean that she wouldn't have known that if she hadn't been a doctor's widow. George liked Mrs. Dove from the beginning. She managed to look both tidy and distraught at the same time, which somehow struck him as an attractive combination, and it was she who first

called his attention to the fact that his father, who stopped the night, had a beautiful "speaking voice." George was to be a paying guest and eat his dinner with Mrs. Dove and the other guest, who was Mr. Mahon. He was really Captain Mahon, Mrs. Dove explained, but he didn't like the title used because at the age when he left the army he ought to have been at least a major. He had been in the commissariat department, and was very particular about his breakfast.

George did not make the acquaintance of Mr. Mahon that evening, because his father took him out to dinner at a queer place under some railway arches, where they sat on red velvet chairs, and Mr. Tracy regretted that fieldfares were not in season. Afterward they went to the Savoy Theater to see *The Gondoliers*. George had never seen anything on the stage more poetical than the Barstow pantomime, and he thought Tessa's song *But Marco's Quite Another Thing* the very heart's cry of passion.

They did not see Mr. Mahon in the morning, because, as Mrs. Dove explained, he never had his breakfast until ten. The further information that he couldn't sleep unless his bed were north and south struck George as remarkable, after his dream,

and he wondered who was Mr. Mahon's Eno that he couldn't get on without. After breakfast they went to the bank by underground from Earl's Court to the Mansion House. George liked the underground; the smell of it seemed to go with the word "London." The bank was in Threadneedle Street, and at first, George was disappointed at its comparative unimportance. But everything in London looked rather smaller than he had expected.

Mr. Baldwin was as bald as his name suggested, and very thin-lipped and precise, though he had a beautiful rose in his buttonhole. He said there was nothing doing, and George felt that it was only Mr. Baldwin's friendship for his father that induced him to be bothered with a learner. The terms between the two men interested him. He had not expected his father to order Mr. Baldwin about, because his father was always kind to subordinates; but it really seemed as if the London branch belonged to Mr. Baldwin. Or, rather, the impression George received was that if all the owners of the bank were dead and forgotten, Mr. Baldwin, for no profit of his own, would still be managing the London branch, where nothing was doing. When Mr. Tracy asked Mr. Baldwin if he

would join them at lunch at one o'clock, Mr. Baldwin did not seem a bit pleased. But George saw that his father liked Mr. Baldwin and had great confidence in him.

In the interval before lunch they went to the Royal Exchange, which, from the apparently aimless though mildly excited men standing about, George supposed to do for commerce what the bar did for government and the higher professions; and to St. Paul's Cathedral, where he was a little surprised to find that his father trod reverently. On consideration, however, he decided that St. Paul's was not quite the same as a church. It was more like his idea of a pantheon, and perhaps his father did reverence to the noble dead of every creed and period, including dead Romans.

They met Mr. Baldwin in a little dark place with a sawdusted floor, where they had steaks, without potatoes, Cheddar cheese, and bitter beer. George was not very hungry, and Mr. Baldwin said, not unkindly, but in a tone of advice:

"At your age my lunch every day cost me two-pence."

Mr. Tracy laughed and said: "Mr. Spaul will take his lunch in hand."

George had already learned that Mr. Spaul was

the cashier, and he wondered what was the joke. Mr. Baldwin, with great scorn, explained that Mr. Spaul was "a rabid vegetarian". Then they talked about gardening. Mr. Baldwin lived at Barking — which seemed to suit his watchdog manner — and grew roses. He asked Mr. Tracy's advice about gardening, as George felt he wouldn't have done about banking, though, as George knew, his father was not an authority upon flowers. Mr. Baldwin said that some day he really must do himself the pleasure of coming down to Bourneside.

The atmosphere of the place, with elderly aproned waiters answering to names like "Henry" and "William," and the conversation, gave George the word he wanted to describe his general impression of London. It was all very homely; much more countrified in a way than Barstow or St. Piran's. After lunch they just had time to go to Westminster Abbey, which, in spite of its greater age, struck George as much less old-fashioned than St. Paul's — "Fiercer, somehow," he phrased it to himself — and to glance at the Houses of Parliament, before Mr. Tracy caught his train at Paddington.

At first George thought that he would not like Mr. Mahon. He was a rather shaky, fresh-colored

old gentleman with a gray mustache; and, particularly in profile, all the lines of his face looked as if they had been done with a pair of compasses. George was displeased at Mr. Mahon's trembling gravity about his dinner. Every now and then he roused himself to make a little joke, but immediately relapsed into the serious business of his plate. George's headache, kept at bay by the novelty of his impressions, now rolled out into the forecourt of his brain; and when Mrs. Dove remarked that he had no appetite, and Mr. Mahon learned that he had dined out the night before, the old gentleman said:

"Aha!" and holding up a fat and shaking forefinger, continued impressively: "*Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit,*" as if he thoroughly understood the situation.

Mr. Mahon drank gin and ginger-beer at dinner, and afterward remained in the dining-room with his bottles and three cigars which he had brought home in a little paper bag. In the drawing-room on the first floor, Mrs. Dove and George had coffee while she talked to him about Mr. Mahon. She was afraid that sometimes he drank too much gin and ginger-beer and became "quite stupid"; but he never forgot that he was a gentleman, and al-

ways came into the drawing-room at ten o'clock to say good night. He spent the whole day at his club, and never touched anything between breakfast and dinner.

George soon lost his dislike of Mr. Mahon. He saw that he was an idealist. All his life was a serious preparation for breakfast and dinner, with self-denials and a whole drama of temptations resisted at the club. He preserved his appetite as a woman might guard her virtue in difficult circumstances. He had a ritual of the subject. His "Can't I tempt you, Mrs. Dove?" as he uncorked the gin bottle, was a formula never omitted, and his "No, no, don't tempt me!" when pressed to a second helping of sweets was an epitome of roguish discretion. Sometimes he would remember to add: "And you the wife of a medical man!"

It was a long time before George had an opportunity to see Mr. Mahon at breakfast. The spectacle was really worth while. With a napkin tucked in his collar, and an air of one performing a religious exercise, the old gentleman slowly and tremblingly absorbed a large plate of porridge, two mutton chops, an egg and seven pieces of toast and marmalade.

Besides his poetic rather than sensual regard for

his appetite, Mr. Mahon had a habit which attracted George. Every Sunday morning he went to mass at the pro-cathedral in High Street, Kensington. It seemed to George quite beautiful that an old gentleman, who had been a soldier, and now thought of nothing but his breakfast and dinner, and spent all his days at a club, should go regularly to mass.

Altogether, George settled down very comfortably in London. In a very short time he was putting Mrs. Dove's cap straight for her, and he won her heart by taking notice of her two cats: Tibby, who was black and a born aristocrat, and Mitty, who was tabby and plebeian and always having kittens. George had a bed-sitting room behind the drawing-room, with a sycamore-tree at the window, and a slanting view into a famous Square, in which most of the houses were draped with Virginia creeper, reminding him of Skye terriers. He did not very often sit in his room. Generally, if he did not go out, he stayed in the drawing-room with Mrs. Dove, and got her to talk about her foreign travels. She had been to Paris, and up the Rhine, and brought back a portfolio of sketches. Her chef-d'œuvre was a red-chalk drawing of Heidelberg Castle.

George's impression of the homeliness of London deepened with further acquaintance. There was the homeliness of the court, which not only Mrs. Dove's well-informed conversation but the newspapers impressed upon him; the homeliness of the city — not to speak of the minor homeliness of the bank — and, at close range, the particular homeliness of the Square. George was not quite clever enough to say that London was extravagantly provincial, but that was what he felt, and *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* was not yet written to glorify its provincialism.

The homeliness of the Square enchanted him. If the Square had not a voice, it had a corporate conscience by no means dependent upon communication between one inhabitant and another. Mrs. Dove did not even know the names of her next-door neighbors. But every house was sensitive to the opinion of the others, and any attempt to strike out a line in decoration had the effect of asserting independence — the surest proof of instinctive solidarity. When a large public event, or a royal birth, marriage, or death was in the air, speculation as to what the Square was going to do about it was evident in every window. If there was any approach to articulate expression of

the common will, it was at the florist's facing the Earl's Court Road — the only shop in the Square. The "Cardigan Arms," flanking one corner with red and gold, was, of course, only concerned with the business of the Mews — though sometimes a servant might carry gossip.

Even the people who waited upon the special material or sentimental needs of the Square had the character of elected officials with vested rights and prospects of a pension. It was not "a" but "the" cat's-meat, muffin, watercress, organ or lavender man. Every Wednesday morning a thin frock-coated old gentleman walked through the Square playing upon an oboe. He never played anything but "Mother in the Realms of Glory, is there Room for Mary There?" and George felt that, less by the capacity of the performer than by a long process of elimination, the tune had been decided upon as best suited to the average musical needs of the neighborhood.

Every morning George went to the bank by underground from Earl's Court to the Mansion House. The staff at the bank consisted of Mr. Baldwin, the manager, Mr. Spaul, the cashier, Mr. Shelmerdine, the senior, and himself, the junior counter-clerk, and Goss, the porter. With Mr.

Baldwin, George had only official relations; but Mr. Spaul and Mr. Shelmerdine were more or less intimately associated with his personal affairs.

Mr. Spaul was a very thin, middle-aged man, with wild eyes and an unprospering beard. His first remark to George was: "So you have come to this accursed place"; and George understood him to mean, not the bank, but London. Mr. Spaul was married and lived at Clapham, where he was always at loggerheads with the education and medical authorities about his children. Besides being a vegetarian, he was an anti-vaccinationist, an anti-vivisectionist, a homeopathist and an agnostic. In after years George recognized that Mr. Spaul must have been a pioneer. He was the abstract garden citizen — a being distinct from the countryman in that he needs a solid mass of bricks and mortar to gird against. But in those days there were no garden cities, or other organized playgrounds for Mr. Spaul's hobbies, so that he had the distinction of a voice crying in the wilderness. On the first Saturday, he caught George by the shoulder and said fiercely, "Come out and save your soul!" He took him to Clapham, fed him on lentils and tomatoes, and then led him a violent walk across the common. In the middle of a

lecture upon proteids and albuminoids he snatched off his hat, and gazing fixedly at a railway embankment, said something about "God's good air."

At first George was interested in Mr. Spaul's ideas, but, though he continued to like him, after a few more violent excursions in God's good air, he found his conversation tiresome. Unlike Mr. Spaul, George was inspired by London, and by this time he had discovered that, if not in the material at any rate in the poetic sense, there was more of God's good air to be breathed in such places as Kensington Gardens, Lincoln's Inn Fields, Chelsea, Tower Hill, and even Mile End Road, not to speak of the enchanting little city churchyards, than in the environs of Clapham. Also he gathered from the conversation of Mrs. Spaul, an anxious woman with three sickly, spectacled little girls, that the basis of Mr. Spaul's revolt from civilization was the fact that the poor fellow was consumptive. Fortunately, as a backslider, one who had succumbed to the "soul-destroying influence of this great city," George was even more enticing to Mr. Spaul than as a convert; and, by keeping in opposition and cultivating a turn for paradox, he remained on the best of terms with the excited cashier.

Mr. Shelmerdine was a Blade. Of all the staff at the bank George liked him least, though he was nearest his own age. He was the only one who seemed to remember that George was the son of one of the partners—an attention that George instinctively resented as much as he appreciated its neglect by Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Spaul. Mr. Shelmerdine frequented music-halls and the company of medical students. He would speak of “a grand tear round” the night before, and of having an awful head on him, and he professed to despise his occupation and to wonder at George’s adopting the same when he might have had a “high old time up at Oxford”; but George observed that he did his work very well and was appreciated by Mr. Baldwin for his quickness in seeing opportunities for new business. He had an irresistible way with chance customers, uncertain where to place an account. Sometimes George went to a music-hall with Mr. Shelmerdine, whose conduct was noisy rather than reprehensible, and once to a hospital smoking concert. Here he was hailed with delight by Tom Burchell, who was now at Guy’s, and the result was that George found himself responsible for Mr. Shelmerdine, instead of the other way about.

George liked his work at the bank. It was just difficult enough in detail to keep his attention occupied without making any real demands upon his intelligence. He would not have said that he was deliberately marking time in order to save his energy for something else, though he soon recognized, with respect for his colleagues, that there was an essential difference between the way he did his work and the way they did theirs. His conscience was for details, theirs for the general scheme. Everything to him was equally important, while they saw exactly what mattered. Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Spaul would seem astonishingly careless about things that he fussed over, but every now and then there would come a little crisis in which no sacrifice of time and trouble was too much for them. As he saw, it was not the fear of consequences or the desire to please employers that inspired them; it was the passionately uncompromising zeal of the artist. The difference between him and them was the difference between the amateur and the professional.

Both Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Spaul were pleased at the way he did his work. They said he was thorough and methodical. It was the gay Mr. Shelmerdine who surprised, and, in spite of the

criticism, pleased him by defining his limitations.

"I say, old man," he said, "you're all right, you know, but, if you don't mind my saying so, you'll never make a banker."

"No?" said George in a tone of very considerable amusement.

"Not for toffee," said Mr. Shelmerdine. "It's a good thing you're not in it for a living." For once George forgave him the hint that he was the son of one of the partners. Mr. Shelmerdine smoothed his wavy black hair, arranged his brilliant tie, and continued:

"Look here. I'll tell you your history, if you were. You'd stick here until I was made chancellor of the exchequer — or cleared out the safe — and then you'd get my stool, with a board school pup who despised you to break in. Then, if you made no serious mistakes — and I don't think you would, because you're careful and clear-headed — after about three years you'd be sent down to Barstow to take your place with half a dozen other good old stick-in-the-muds. Once there you'd wait for somebody to die. Every now and then your name would come up. 'Mr. Tracy? Oh, yes; a careful reliable man, but no initiative.' One after one you'd see your chances go, and by the time

you were forty, and bald, you'd be glad to get a managership at Little Slocum, with jessamine over the name-board and quite a rush on market day."

George laughed at the picture, though he recognized its probable truth. Mr. Shelmerdine saw through him in banking, just as Darragh did in scholarship. The implications were different, however. He was not expected to distinguish himself in banking. Interested, he asked Mr. Shelmerdine exactly what did make a banker.

"Ah, there you are," said Mr. Shelmerdine. "Might as well ask me what makes Bessie Bellwood or Charlie Coburn. You've got it, or you haven't. Your governor's got it — or had it for the old conditions. It's" — he gently pummeled his large nose in the effort to think of an illustration — "it's knowing when and what and why — all at the same time. It's knowing just when to let the tidy little routine go hang and put your shirt on what looks like the off-chance. Even old Baldwigs hasn't got quite that. What he doesn't know about what is isn't worth knowing. It's what isn't — Oh, I can smell it!"

George knew that Mr. Shelmerdine was not bragging, nor was he greatly disturbed at the destructive criticism of himself. He was at least

learning "what is" and the way the tide of money ebbed and flowed. Moreover, though as yet he would hardly trust the feeling, he began to suspect that his detachment gave him certain advantages. Even Mr. Shelmerdine, though he felt — or smelt — every fluctuation in the tide of money, and, as his guarded remark about Mr. Tracy showed, was aware that the general movement was not the same as it had been, did not appear to notice the cosmic changes that were reflected in the tide.

George could not pretend to understand the changes, but he felt them. As he extended his knowledge of London, he began to see the reason of what he had called homeliness. London in general had altered, but London in particular was not aware of it. The city, Westminster — and even such minor provinces as the Square — preserved their own traditions. The traditions no longer corresponded with the facts. Most of the institutions of London were frankly survivals, and St. Paul's looked old-fashioned because it really expressed the city. Meanwhile, what Mr. Tracy called the new race, "very sharp and able," and, from what George could make out, chiefly composed of Americans and Jews, was gradually invading London and exploiting its homeliness.

London was uneasily aware of the new race, but, instead of trying to absorb it, either grumbled or made clumsy attempts to imitate the methods of the invaders.

From George's position, he heard most of the grumbling. If he had been asked to put his general impression into words, he would have said that commerce, London's proper game, unless it were frankly old-fashioned, was disappearing in finance. People used to make things and then sell them in order to make money; now they were trying to make money out of money, and things had become only a means to that end. The comparatively few people who continued to make things for their own sake were doing so at an enormous disadvantage — chiefly because they did not make the things that other people really wanted. Then they either grumbled at the change in taste, or spent their energy in inventing all sorts of ingenious ways of inducing people to buy things that they did not really want. Hence the enormous increase of advertising. From conversations with customers over the counter, George was led to believe that inducing people to buy what they did not want had become the accepted meaning of good business.

His own immediate concern, of course, was with

finance; but he could not help seeing past it. Indeed, he was beginning to feel that the peculiarity which distinguished him from most other people was that he did see past the legitimate occupation of the moment. He did not yet claim it as a virtue; on the contrary, he saw that, so far, it had kept him from doing anything really well. Until he got hold of something that he could not see past, some game that could be played indefinitely on its own lines to the satisfaction of all his faculties, he could not really put his weight into it. Meanwhile, as Darragh said, he was banking himself — with all sorts of accumulating interest in the way of observations. It amused him to think that, just as the business of banking was supposed not to injure social prestige, so it seemed not to hinder the harmonious development of one's general powers. It did not, like scholarship, commit you to exhausting effort in one direction — which might be the wrong one.

CHAPTER X

ONE great advantage of the bank to George was that it acted as a sort of magnet to people from his own part of the country. George was not homesick, but he was very loyal to the place of his birth. He professed to be able to pick out West-country people in the streets of London, saying that they looked larger and cleaner than everybody else. Few of the regular customers at the bank were more than Barstovians by descent — if they were Barstovians at all — and some had never been to Barstow, but seldom a day passed without a man or woman coming in who belonged to the West and was only in London on business or pleasure. To George they were always friends, and he generally managed to add to the necessary formalities and remarks upon the weather some question about West-country affairs. Mr. Sheldermine complained that he was far more anxious to talk turnips than to get business. "I believe you'd honor anything with a Barstow accent," he said.

One morning a lady came in who looked more like Paris than Barstow. She was not young, but remarkably handsome. George instinctively left her to Mr. Shelmerdine, who as instinctively arranged his tie. The lady walked up to the counter, and resting the tips of her fingers upon it, coolly compared one young man with the other. Then, with a little almost ironical bow to Mr. Shelmerdine, she turned to George.

"It's you I want," she said; "you must be the son of Walter Tracy, though you're not much like him."

George confessed his paternity, and the lady said: "I'm Mrs. Glanville."

The name conveyed nothing to George, and before he could think of something polite, she went on:

"Of course you wouldn't. Nor would your father, for the matter of that. Tell him you've been to see Jane Marlow—that is if you'll come on Sunday? I had your address, but I've lost it."

George said he should be delighted, but he looked so confused that Mrs. Glanville laughed outright.

"It's quite proper," she said. "I knew your father—oh, years ago. How is he, and has he saved England with cabbages?"

George said that his father was very well, and tried to think of a witty retort to the question about cabbages, which he recognized to be cheeky; but before he could do so Mrs. Glanville had recovered herself and said:

“Never mind. On Sunday, then, at four-thirty; 5, Devonport Terrace, Hyde Park — close to Lancaster Gate. You’d better put it down.”

Half amused and half resentful, George obeyed, and then, shaking hands with a quick little squeeze that completely demoralized him, the spirited lady acknowledged Mr. Shelmerdine’s homage of the eye, and moved to the door. Through the blind George observed that Goss, the porter, put her into a very smart-looking carriage.

“Widow, money, rides in the Row, eye for a good-looking young man,” said Mr. Shelmerdine concisely and not uncomplacently. “Always thought your respected governor had been a bit of a boy-oh.”

“Shut up!” said George good-humoredly. In passing, he conceded the justice of, at any rate, one item in Mr. Shelmerdine’s summary, and wished he had his coolness. Mrs. Glanville had the carriage of a horsewoman. “She takes a lot for granted,” he said loftily.

"Rats!" said Mr. Shelmerdine. "You'll be there on Sunday. Wish I had your luck."

In the interval, George tried to persuade himself that he was not curious about Mrs. Glanville. He wondered how she had got his address — which she had lost. He had never heard his father speak of Jane Marlow, though that was nothing, because he seldom spoke of his early days. Mrs. Glanville would be a few years younger than his father, he supposed. He dismissed the suggestion conveyed by Mr. Shelmerdine's impudent remark. Jane Marlow might have been in love with his father, but he felt instinctively that she wouldn't have said cheeky things about a man who had been in love with her. Evidently, though, his father's passion for land was an old story.

On Sunday, when he presented himself at 5, Devonport Terrace, his curiosity about Mrs. Glanville was diverted, because the first person she introduced him to was Mary Festing.

"I should have explained," said Mrs. Glanville, "only the good-looking Jew boy undid me, that it was Mary who got me your address. She got it from the boy Darragh—you must bring him here."

It was all too close-packed for immediate comprehension. For one thing, it hadn't occurred to George that Mr. Shelmerdine was a Jew, though now he recognized the probability, and marveled at Mrs. Glanville's cleverness. Then, apparently, Mrs. Glanville didn't know Darragh yet, and so Mary must have talked about himself to Mrs. Glanville. The result of his confused though rapid reflections was that he held Mary Festing's cool slim hand a moment longer than he might otherwise have done, and said, with almost injured impulsiveness, "You again!"

She laughed, and the sound of her laugh — low, melancholy, and yet triumphant — made him take her in, and it was as if the laugh had sketched her. Then he was glad that he had spoken as he had, for he knew that he could never again speak with the same detachment to the slender girl — the sickle moon in her hollow stoop and silveriness — who now, as if shy at his glance, moved away and left him to Mrs. Glanville.

While he talked to that lady, George was oddly divided between pleasure and resentment. "It's a trap," he said to himself; "she was sitting there like a spider for a fly." For with belated percep-

tion he was now aware that Mary's narrow eyes had been on him the moment he entered the room. "What does she want?" he said to himself.

"So," said Mrs. Glanville, sinking to a couch and taking him down with a gesture, "you're Walter Tracy's son. But that's neither here nor there. I love young men."

Three of her young men were present, now engaged with Mary Festing and a "flapper", whom George understood to be Miss Glanville.

The effect of Mary Festing's presence upon George was to give him extraordinary ease with Mrs. Glanville; and accepting her dismissal of his father as an invitation to be cheeky, he rattled on about Cardigan Square and his cock-sure impressions of London. Mrs. Glanville listened with huge appreciation, though her occasional side-glance might have meant that she could not quite reconcile him with a previous description. That only pleased him, though he was not clearly conscious of a desire to show Mary Festing that she was wrong about him. He felt that he had established the right relations with Mrs. Glanville from the beginning, and half wished that Mr. Shelmerdine were there to hear him talk.

"Oh, you're perfectly gorgeous!" said Mrs.

Glanville, when he gave her a chance, in a tone that might have meant anything —“ egregious,” for example.

George laughed and said:

“ Now you know all about me, it’s only fair —”

“ Oh, you must ask your father,” said Mrs. Glanville. “ It’s enough for you that I’m a lone widow, with a daughter just married, and a son in the navy quite big enough to keep you in order.”

Her tone, combined with what she had said before, convinced him that she had found his father as amusing as she seemed to find him. But he was not now greatly curious about Mrs. Glanville; she was good fun, and she seemed to attract pleasant people. What he really wanted to know was where Mary Festing came in. Evidently, from her dress, she was not stopping in the house. But information about her was not forthcoming, and nothing would have induced him to ask questions.

The house indicated prosperity, if not wealth, and a turn for hospitality. There were plenty of books and magazines about, and the pictures were of a sort that George supposed to be “ good”; but comparing the atmosphere with that of Mrs. Darragh’s cottage, he would have said that culture was here taken in the stride of a general alertness

to life rather than indulged as an instinct. Looking at Mrs. Glanville, he guessed that clothes interested her more than anything; he had never seen anybody dressed quite so frankly. He could not have said what the difference was, but by comparison, other women he had noticed seemed to want to hide the fact that they had the shapes of women. Mrs. Glanville's conversation seemed to go with her clothes; it was not that she said anything outrageous, but she talked easily about things that, in the mixed company he was accustomed to, were tacitly avoided. She talked about music-halls, for example, and told him a lot about a Spanish dancer he had lately seen. If he had thought it out, he would have said that people like Mrs. Glanville could talk about bodies with as little embarrassment as people like Darragh talked about souls. It was a new experience to him, and he liked it.

He gathered that one of the young men was an artist and the other two were Oxford undergraduates. He had been told their names on introduction, but the consciousness of Mary, and his revolt from it into sharpening his wits against Mrs. Glanville's, had prevented his taking them in. From the noise they made, the young men seemed to be having a good time with Mary and Miss Glanville,

whose name he understood to be Dolly. Attracted and amused as he was by Mrs. Glanville, George could not help glancing in their direction; he was curious to know what Oxford men were like, for one thing. The result was that Mrs. Glanville said: "But of course you want to talk to Mary."

He wanted nothing of the sort, but he was not going to funk it. His approach altered the balance of the group, and after a violent appeal from both sides — Dolly and one of the undergraduates were upholding common-sense against imagination — he was relegated with Mary to the unspeakable ignominy of sitting on the fence.

George was acutely aware of the lurkingness of Mary. Dressed in cool gray linen, in a manner that he supposed to be artistic, she curved into her chair, with hollow hands idle in her lap. The stillness of her made him aggressive, and he said bluntly:

"Well, what are you doing?"

Mary said that she was writing. He felt, somehow, that it gave her an unfair advantage, though he couldn't have said why. Half inclined to say: "You were quite wrong; I've never written any poetry," he expressed the same idea by saying, rather defiantly, "I'm banking."

"Yes, I know," said Mary, and that made him feel gratuitous.

"How are the Darraghs?" he said in a tone that was meant to imply indifference to the subject.

Mary said that they were very well. "Miles is coming up to London at Christmas to go to the Slade," she added.

He didn't know what the Slade was, but he was not going to betray curiosity, so he nodded intelligently and said:

"Is Mrs. Darragh coming up, too?"

Mary said: "No, Miles is going into rooms." She volunteered the information that she had rooms in King's Road, Chelsea. George tried not to look interested, but without success. The idea of a young woman living alone in London was new to him, though he had heard of such things as a symptom of independence. He could not help looking respectful as he said:

"I thought your people lived in London."

"So they do," said Mary, not without a certain complacency, "but we get on better apart."

He was not quite old enough to appreciate the fact that Mary had not yet outgrown the consciousness of her independence. The effect of her statement was to make him want to swagger in his turn,

and he began to talk in a man-of-the-world way about the city. He was hoping that Mary would ask him why he had given up Oxford; he would have liked an opportunity to say something compassionate about the two undergraduates, who were still, so to speak, under discipline. But Mary was, or pretended to be, interested in the city. George knew all the time that when it came to bluffing he was no match for her. At twenty-one she was a woman, while he, with every assertion about his masculine responsibilities and amusements, felt the maternal supervision of Mrs. Dove. As if to rub in the difference between them, Mary said:

“How’s your mother?”

That took him unawares, and he had a vivid picture of the scene in the nursery at Bourneside. He felt himself blushing as he said that his mother was very well. It seemed to him indelicate of Mary to speak of his mother. Apart from that, the reference reminded him of the present unsatisfactory terms between his mother and himself. Mary could know nothing about that, he had not even told Darragh; but he felt that she was looking at him curiously. Though they had not met for ten years, there was an obscure connection in his mind between Mary and his mother that he could

not analyze. He became shy and silent, and presently Mary rose to go.

George knew that he wanted to go with her. Why, it was not clear; he wanted to have it out with her, to assert himself somehow. But he could not pluck up courage to say, "I'll come with you," in the presence of other people, and so he let her go away with the young artist, Mr. Lindrop, who, he understood, also lived in Chelsea.

When Mary said good-by to Mrs. Glanville, George caught himself listening against his will for any remark that would throw light on her circumstances. He was curious to know whether or not she had come with Mr. Lindrop, though he told himself that it was not his business. But Mrs. Glanville only said, "Well, at any rate, you've had a good tea," and Mary said, "Oh, Mrs. Pinney stuffs me like a pig"; a remark that gave George peculiar comfort, less on account of the stuffing than because it seemed to him satisfactory that Mrs. Glanville should know who Mrs. Pinney was.

After Mary had gone, Mrs. Glanville told him that her poems and short stories were attracting attention, and one of the undergraduates looked very wise and said: "Oh, she's the real thing." George would not ask where Mary's poems and

short stories came out, but he made a mental note of the magazines that were lying about the room. He felt that he could not rise to Mrs. Glanville now, and he declined her invitation to stop to supper, though he promised to come again. Mrs. Glanville was always at home on Sunday.

George walked across Kensington Gardens in a mixture of emotions. He felt as if he had suddenly grown up. The idea that he might be in love with Mary Festing made him blush, and he said indignantly, aloud, "I'm not"; very much as he had denied the accusation of writing poetry, in the nursery at Bourneside. No, he argued, it was not that, but Mary Festing reminded him that he was now a man. From this time he began to keep Mrs. Dove a little at a distance, and to sit in his own room of an evening. It was absurd, he thought, that a fellow of his age should not be in proper diggings.

Whether or not because Mary had spoken of his mother, and so reminded him of home, he began to be bothered by the Bourne. Below the traffic of the street he heard the older thunder of the Waterfall. Then he happened to read somewhere that the Serpentine was a relic of the Westbourne. That gave him a clue. Undoubtedly the hidden

stream passed under Devonport Terrace. In Cornwall he had been told about "dowsers," and their mysterious faculty for tracing water. He wondered if he had this faculty. Then the name "Westbourne Grove" jumped into his mind with occult significance. He dreamed of the Grove; curved like the sickle moon, with hollow hands idle in her lap, Mary floated past the tops of the fir-trees and, moonlike, swayed some tide in his heart, while somewhere his mother was crying happily. He said to himself that if he had met Mary anywhere but in Devonport Terrace, over the hidden Westbourne, he would not have been troubled in this way. But all the time he knew that the trouble was connected somehow with the fulfilment of his nature.

George continued to go to Devonport Terrace. He liked Mrs. Glanville; she gave him a feeling of security that was not the security of ignorance. On one side she was delightfully worldly, and on the other side she understood Mary. Sometimes Mary was there, and supported by Mrs. Glanville's jolly presence, he could meet her without fear. He liked to see her sitting there in her lurking attitude, as if listening to the hidden stream, and if ever she threatened to become embarrassing

there was Mrs. Glanville to back him up easily in his bluffing.

As against Mary, he and Mrs. Glanville took the side of the world. Mrs. Glanville's husband had been a stock-broker; she knew all about business, and had traveled a great deal, with an intelligent appreciation of the romantic side of things, but a healthy enjoyment of the advantages of money. She remembered the churches, but also the good hotels. On the other hand, as the daughter of a Somerset squire, she was well up in the associations of outdoor life, and took a keen interest in sport. Mr. Shelmerdine was quite right about her riding in the Row. It was in Somerset that she had known Mr. Tracy. They had hunted together. George never got to the bottom of the relation between them. Whenever he talked about his father to Mrs. Glanville, she began to laugh, and once she said: "He's got a bee in his bonnet, my dear." The way she said it, with a mixture of amusement and affectionate regret, made him feel how splendidly he had taken in Mrs. Glanville about himself. Evidently she never suspected his queer feelings about Mary.

He had written to his father about Mrs. Glanville after her first visit to the bank. His father wrote

in return: "How kind of Mrs. Glanville to look you up. I remember her well; you will find her a delightful companion. Please give her my kindest regards." George got the impression that his father must have bluffed Jane Marlow very much as he himself was bluffing Mary Festing, only in a different direction.

Dolly Glanville, who was seventeen, was a great ally against Mary. She was no end of a swell at mathematics, and was going up to Newnham when she left school. Then there was her newly-married sister, Mrs. Raymond, who sometimes came in with her doctor husband from Wimpole Street. The Raymonds had all the knowingness of a young happily-married couple, intensified by a medical atmosphere. Between them all they kept Mary in a minority of what they called soulfulness, and held her up to affectionate derision. George, who felt that in this company he could somehow have it out with Mary Festing and still keep his own confidence, joined in the chaffing. Mary took him on his own terms, but occasionally, as if to remind him of discretion, she would look at him out of her narrow eyes and quietly say something that got home upon the self he concealed. It was as if she had a key to the side-door of his nature.

He resented her possession of it, and said to himself that it would be all right when Darragh came to London. Then he could push Mary off on Darragh and still enjoy, as he undoubtedly did enjoy, the strange thrill of her company. Darragh would bring out, as the Glanvilles did not, and he only at peril to himself, the side of Mary that against his will he wanted. He could not work it out clearly, but it seemed to him that Darragh would act as a sort of lightning-conductor.

What Mrs. Glanville told him about Mary seemed to confirm his early ideas about the parentage of Indian children. When he said that he wondered that Mary's parents let her live alone, Mrs. Glanville said: "Which of them?" adding, with great contempt, "They're glad enough to be rid of the responsibility. They've got their own affairs." George did not pursue the subject, though, remembering what Mrs. Glanville had said about a good tea, he was glad to hear that Mary's parents gave her an allowance. He had already learned that Mr. Lindrop was a person of no account so far as Mary was concerned. Mary's relation to the Glanvilles was easily explained; she and Dolly had been schoolfellows.

George read some of Mary's poems and short

stories. They went with his idea of her personality; they seemed to lurk for you both in the pages of magazines and in your mind afterward. The poems were generally about landscape or weather, and the stories about children. As George put it, they told you nothing, but let out a lot, and when you tried to say what it was, you couldn't, except in the words of the poems or the stories. Mary made him think about words; he found himself repeating: "Mary Festing, Chelsea." The addition of the last word intensified the feeling he had on hearing Mary's name for the first time. It made her more remote than ever, and yet strangely persistent, like the sighing of wind in tree-tops on a summer afternoon, or the far-off murmur of the sea.

Devonport Terrace became great fun in George's relations with Mr. Shelmerdine. The latter was not unduly inquisitive, but George's grown-upness could not escape so sharp an observer. It amused George to think how far Mr. Shelmerdine was from the truth when he made knowing remarks about Miss Glanville, for a protective instinct had made George play up to him by volunteering a description of the Glanville household. George would not have admitted that he was in love with Mary Fest-

ing, but he knew that the lurking idea of her in his mind must be surrounded by elaborate make-believe about other people. He felt that he scored over Mr. Shelmerdine as a man of the world by the discovery of Mr. Shelmerdine's own little secret. Tactful allusions had confirmed the truth of Mrs. Glanville's description.

In September, George went home for a holiday. It was then that he recognized how he had grown up in the last few months, particularly in his ideas about women. Even Amelia was now surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery. Her little room over the front door had become for him the most sacred part of the house. There was a rose at one side of the window and a jasmine at the other, so that the room had all the character of a bower, and a goldfinch built regularly in a little cypress on the lawn immediately opposite the window. All this now struck George as beautifully appropriate, though he had never thought about it before, particularly when Amelia told him that in June a nightingale had sung in the shrubbery on the Side Lawn. He pictured Amelia leaning on the window-sill in her nightgown in the warm night, listening to the bird. It was in one corner of the Lawn opposite Amelia's window that George had fought Tom

Burchell, and he now felt that in some unexplained way his anger had been connected with his reverence for women. Certainly his feelings about the iris resembled his feelings about them.

He now treated Amelia with immense consideration. It is to be feared that she did not rise to his ideas about her, but larked with the young men who came to play tennis in the most commonplace way. She said that George had got frightfully solemn since he had been in London.

With his mother, George was on rather harrowing terms. She no longer complained, but made a point of accepting the situation. Their positions were now reversed. It was now George who wanted to confide in her. He wanted to tell her about Mary Festing. The reason, as he knew, was partly selfish; he felt instinctively that, better than anybody else, his mother could help him to understand his feelings; but he said to himself that his mother had liked Mary Festing and would be glad to hear about her. But when he told his mother that he had met Mary again, she said politely:

“Oh, yes. She’s a friend of the Darraghs, isn’t she?”

George hastened to assure her that this time he

had met Mary independently of the Darraghs. He reminded her that Mrs. Glanville was a friend of his father's.

Mrs. Tracy laughed. "Yes, I know," she said, "we have often talked about Miss Jane Marlow. People used to tease your father about her; she ran after him in the most barefaced way. Her father, you know, was one of the biggest land-owners in Somerset, and Jane would have got him to do something for your father. But he had other ideas. However, she seems to have got over it all right. Evidently it was only a girlish infatuation. Your father was very good-looking, you know."

At one time all this would have interested George, but he felt now that it was irrelevant. He said that Mrs. Glanville was very kind to Mary Festing.

"Evidently she is a very good-natured woman," said his mother. "It was kind of her to look you up, and I hope you will take full advantage of her hospitality. She must know all sorts of people who might be useful to you in business."

George felt snubbed. He knew that his mother did not care a snap for business. Once again he said to himself that women were the devil. They

never would accept the province in which they might be of use to a fellow. At the same time, he appreciated the humor of the situation. The way his mother persisted in "seeing" Mrs. Glanville was precisely the way he played up to Mrs. Glanville in bluffing Mary Festing. Even if he had wanted to, he could swear that he had not bluffed his mother. She simply would not be drawn.

George made other attempts to hold out the olive-branch to his mother, but without result. She was perfectly good-humored, and even affectionate, but she would not now accept the confidence he had hitherto denied her. Whenever he showed signs of becoming confidential, she began to talk about business; and once, when he artfully edged in the subject of Mary Festing by repeating a conversation between the young people at Devonport Terrace, his mother said:

"You seem to have great fun, but you mustn't forget that you are learning to be a banker. I shouldn't get too much mixed up with an artistic set, if I were you. They are rather apt to play instead of work."

He felt that it was aimed at Darragh, and that froze him up. It was not that he was prepared to

confess to a personal interest in Mary Festing, but he wanted to talk round her, and he knew that a year ago his mother would have welcomed such an opportunity.

Gently but firmly repulsed by his mother, George was drawn into still closer companionship with his father. Here, at any rate, there was perfect confidence — as far as it went; for, as George knew, there was a whole side of him that his father ignored. Now that he had some practical acquaintance with business, Mr. Tracy talked to him about the affairs of the bank as well as about the land. Old Walter cheerfully accepted the situation. For him the bank was a legitimate occupation, and Bourneside a pleasant home. Improvement in both was to be welcomed as improving the family position, but he had no other ideas upon the subject. Mr. Tracy was interested in George's observations of London, though he did not interpret them in quite the same way as George. His attitude to the new spirit in business might be described as stoical. He believed in sitting tight; particularly in sitting tight upon the land. Honest finance and the land were his remedies. George did not underrate them, but he had an increasing belief that something might still be done with commerce and

manufacture. He did not see exactly how it was to be done, but he was more and more convinced that no serious attempt had yet been made to develop them under the new conditions.

In his hours of leisure George renewed his allegiance to the landscape of his childhood. He took long walks in every direction, clearing up little topographical problems that had puzzled him, confirming some beliefs and exploding some illusions. But with clearer knowledge, the sense of mystery remained. Everything had now a deeper meaning connected, not with the dreams of a child, but with the emotions of a man. He was not prepared to call it love, it was too complicated by the feeling of resistance; but he observed, as a new thing, that the Waterfall was the mingled destiny of two rivers, and when he walked in the Grove he read into the secret murmuring of the Bourne the words, "Mary Festing, Chelsea."

CHAPTER XI

DARRAGH came up to London in January. One of the pleasures of his coming that George had looked forward to was denied him, because Darragh knew his way about London better than he did. George was struck by the extremely practical way in which Darragh, whom he had always regarded as a dreamer, managed his affairs. He had half expected that Darragh would settle in Chelsea, but Darragh said it was too far from the Slade school, too dear and too dilettante. He took a top room in Red Lion Square, nearly opposite the house that Rossetti and William Morris had lived in.

The first time George took Darragh to Devonport Terrace he recognized the soundness of the vague idea at the back of his mind. There was no need to push Mary Festing off on Darragh. The latter was quite civil to Mrs. Glanville, but he went at once to Mary and talked to her most of the afternoon. From the unalloyed pleasure that it gave him to see them together, George knew that he could not

be in love with Mary. He was not in the least jealous, though he was a little envious. It must be jolly to be able to talk to Mary about real things without being embarrassed or having to play the man of the world.

When they came away Darragh said something to George about his not liking Mary.

"Oh, I like her all right," said George, "but she's rather too clever for me."

"She's very simple," said Darragh.

George reflected that it was exactly her simplicity that he was afraid of; she was always being simple in unexpected places; but he did not say so. He could not have put it clearly.

The situation created by Darragh's arrival pleased him very well. Taking sides with Mrs. Glanville had its disadvantages, because it kept Mary from talking seriously. George liked Mary to talk seriously — so long as he did not have to take part in the conversation. Darragh did that for him, and George was quite content to listen or to say: "Yes, that's what I mean." It did not worry him that Mary evidently regarded him as rather a sheep. He did not care what she thought about him so long as she did not make him give himself away.

Nor was he disturbed when the Glanvilles pres-

ently said that Darragh must be in love with Mary Festing. It seemed natural. But something he heard made a deeper impression on George than he knew at the time. One Sunday afternoon in April, when he left Devonport Terrace, Doctor Raymond walked with him across the Gardens. Mary and Darragh had previously gone away together to Chelsea. Mrs. Raymond was about to have her first baby and the young doctor was in a mood both sentimental and physiological. With due regard for the youth of his companion, he talked remorsefully of the risks women had to run on account of men.

“Of course, it’s right,” he said, “and I wouldn’t have my wife shirk her responsibilities. I see too much of the misery caused by that sort of thing — let alone the duty to the race. But, after all, it’s easy enough to talk. We don’t have to go through it. I tell you what it is, Tracy, it makes a man feel a selfish hound.”

George murmured something sympathetic, though he could not help feeling rather amused. Without knowing the reason, he had observed that Mrs. Glanville was inclined to be scornful of her son-in-law that afternoon. Indeed, it was she who had proposed that Doctor Raymond should accompany

him, saying: "For Heaven's sake take him away, George. He's getting on my nerves, and he'll only be a nuisance to Carrie if he goes home." Now that he understood the reason, George wondered if husbands were always so illogical. He himself had a sort of mind that accepts consequences from the beginning, though he was prepared to admit that it is easy enough to talk.

Doctor Raymond continued to talk about the subject nearest his heart, with illustrations both comforting and alarming, drawn from his experience. George thought him rather tiresomely uxorious, but he could not help feeling a little flattered by the claim upon his sympathy. He asked intelligent questions, and the subject gradually ascended from the physiological to the psychological region, and from the personal to the general. They discussed the laws of attraction, with their mysteries and complications, and presently Doctor Raymond said something about "poor old Darragh."

George asked why Darragh was to be pitied, and Doctor Raymond said:

"Well, anybody can see that he is strongly attracted by Mary Festing."

George said that he thought that Mary was very fond of Darragh, and Doctor Raymond said: "Yes,

but not in the same way. Miss Festing will never marry."

He went on to speak of natural celibates. To the trained observer, he said, there were all sorts of signs. In his opinion, Mary Festing was of the vestal type. All her emotional life went into her work. "Besides," he added, "I happen to know her own ideas upon the subject. Women talk among themselves just as we do, and she once told my wife that the physical side of love repelled her. 'Horrid,' was the expression she used."

At the time the information seemed to George poetically right. It went with his own white thoughts about Mary Festing; her association in his mind with the sickle moon, the lurking coolness of her verse and prose — even with the sighing remoteness of her name and place: "Mary Festing, Chelsea." Passion had never come into his thoughts regarding her; the difference was that henceforward she was definitely and beautifully set apart from passion. What Doctor Raymond said about Darragh did not concern him; he supposed that Darragh thought about Mary Festing in the same way that he did.

Soon after this conversation Darragh took George to see Mary Festing in Chelsea. Mary had already

given George a general invitation, but he had been shy about visiting her alone, and had contented himself with identifying the house in which she lived, when he had been rather depressed by the squalor of King's Road. It comforted him that the house in which Mary lived was a little screened from the road by trees.

Mary's rooms were at the top of the house. A motherly-looking woman, whom Darragh greeted familiarly as Mrs. Pinney, opened the front door, upon the jamb of which were several little brass name-plates. The prints and etchings upon the walls of the narrow staircase seemed to indicate that the owners of the names were artists. Mary opened the door when Darragh knocked, and said, "Oh, it's you, Miles," and then, with a slight change of tone: "This is an honor, George." The impression George received was that Mary was not very well pleased to see him, and he was half sorry that he had come.

He was glad, however, to see Mary's room. The walls were white and bare, the ceiling sloped to the windows, and a low couch covered with dark blue serge made a severe pattern against the wall. A Sheraton writing-table, another small table and three chairs were all the furniture, and there were

very few books. The only picture was a reproduction of Whistler's *Mother*, which, in its angular lines, seemed to sum up the character of the room. With Doctor Raymond's conversation fresh in his mind, however, George felt that the atmosphere of the room was more like that of Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini*.

Mary sat upon the couch, with her hands in her lap, bending a little forward. She looked very thin and dark against the white wall, and in spite of her stillness, very swift. They talked about the Slade school. George had already learned that Darragh had made a remarkable impression at the school; he was talked about as a genius. Darragh did not seem elated; his conversation was severely practical. He was critical of the methods of teaching. It was as if he knew exactly what he needed to learn, and meant to have his own way. George envied him his quiet confidence. Mary's questions about the school, though she neither drew nor painted, sounded practical, too. George knew that he was listening to the conversation of real professionals; people to whom art was a matter of precise knowledge. He was beginning to feel that artists were the only people who really understood their business. In passing, Mary's manner to Dar-

ragh reminded him of Eleanor Markham's to himself in his childhood — with the difference that Mary seemed satisfied.

With Darragh between them he felt oddly at ease with Mary. If she had suddenly begun to talk about the scene in the nursery at Bourneside he would not have been in the least embarrassed. He could have told her why she ought to have been a Servian princess, and why he had given in to Walter so easily. "Don't you see," he would have said, "that it was no use arguing? They would not have understood. We were talking a different language." He could almost have told Mary why he had fought Tom Burchell about the broken iris. In this company it would have been a commonplace to say: "It was a crime upon beauty."

He knew that Mary understood him as nobody else did, not even himself. He could hide nothing from her. She asked Darragh questions, but she did not ask him questions. She took him for granted, as if she said: "You can wait." But if she called him he would have to come, wherever he was; he would have to do whatever she told him to do. He half enjoyed, half resented her power.

At present she would let him alone. He knew by instinct that she was not dissatisfied at his being in the bank. The only thing she said that sounded like a reproof was: "You have not been to see Eleanor Markham."

She said it, fixing her dark eyes on him with quiet assurance, so that he dismissed the idea of excusing himself by saying that he did not know where Eleanor Markham lived, though it was true. He knew that Mrs. Markham was dead, and Rose married, and that Eleanor kept house for her father somewhere near London. Mary now told him that the Markhams lived at Holmhurst, in Surrey.

"They have a most beautiful garden," she said. "I am going down there on Saturday."

It was only then that George felt a return of self-consciousness. To sit with Mary and Darragh in a room was one thing; to sit with Mary and Eleanor Markham in a beautiful garden quite another. But he said that he would go to see the Markhams.

When Mrs. Pinney brought tea she embarrassed George by asking him if he did not think that Mary looked well. "Mr. Darragh would never notice," she said compassionately, "he's one of the same sort, he is. But you look as if you treated your

stomach proper and went out. You should take Miss Festing on the river."

"Don't frighten him, Mrs. Pinney," said Mary with mock gravity, and George wondered exactly what she meant. He was afraid she was getting at him.

After Mrs. Pinney had gone he found himself talking about Mrs. Dove and Cardigan Square. But not as he talked about them to Mrs. Glanville. He told Mary and Darragh about Mrs. Dove's pathetic memorials of her better days, and how she loved the queen. He believed that just as good people were supposed to be always ready to meet God, so Mrs. Dove lived as if at any moment she might be called upon to receive the queen in Cardigan Square. Then there was Mr. Mahon: how he went to mass, and his sensitiveness about the army, as if he felt that he had been an unworthy soldier. George wished that he could ask Mary to Cardigan Square, but he did not quite see how it could be managed. Darragh had already been there and had won Mrs. Dove's heart by praising her drawings.

When the two young men came away Darragh spoke of Mary's unhappy life with her parents. He said that there was nothing to choose between

them, and if George had reflected he might have seen that there was a good reason why so young a girl should hastily decide that one aspect of life was "horrid".

Through Darragh and Mary, George became acquainted with the literary and artistic world of London. He quickly saw that it was not his world, and he was glad that some instinct had warned him that his talents were not in the direction of art or literature. He saw that a great many of the people in that world were there by mistake, and that it was upon their uneasy efforts to feel at home that most of the common sayings about the artistic temperament were based. Real artists like Mary and Darragh were very practical. The artistic temperament was all right if you had enough of it, but a little was disturbing and led to all sorts of affectations.

There was Mr. Lindrop, for example. At first George had supposed that Mr. Lindrop must be a very great artist, because he looked so romantic and was always talking about imagination. His studio was full of beautiful things, and there were always a lot of young women about. Mr. Lindrop sang to them and talked to them about their clothes under pink shaded lights with pastilles burning on

Moorish tables. George thought Mr. Lindrop's pictures rather weak, and yet they pleased him. When he spoke to Darragh about them, Darragh said:

“ Oh, Lindrop is a duffer, but he has an exquisite sense of color. He thinks that by sticking wings on a figure or putting the head on one side you make it poetical. If he would leave the figure alone and stick to still-life, he might do charming things.”

Looking at Mr. Lindrop's pictures again, George saw that it was the color that had pleased him. He observed Mr. Lindrop holding a piece of green silk against a girl's hair, and the tantalizing thought came into his mind that there was a real use for Mr. Lindrop somewhere if one could only think of it.

George found that his life was getting fuller of such tantalizing thoughts. It was partly, no doubt, due to his not yet having found his own game, but wherever he went he was bothered by the idea of waste, of people doing things indifferently while their real capabilities were being neglected. His conversations with Darragh and Shelmerdine, who were his two most intimate companions, often turned on the subject. Darragh said he didn't

know about that, and Shelmerdine said that the reason was economical. The word made George laugh, and Shelmerdine became argumentative.

“You’ve got a lot of ideas, old chap,” he said, “but you don’t understand business. First of all, a thing’s got to be made to pay, to give a good return on capital.”

“Well, how are you going to make it pay?” said George.

“That’s a large order,” said Shelmerdine, “but advertising goes a long way. Make people see that they’re getting good value for their money. That’s why concerns are getting bigger and bigger. The small firms can’t afford to advertise, and so they go under.”

At the time George was not prepared to argue, but he was inwardly convinced that Shelmerdine had no idea how things were done, except from the point of view of the investor. That presently gave him a clue to some of the problems that were bothering him. One result of concerns getting bigger and bigger was a separation of interests. It was not merely a separation between capital and labor; it was a separation between the financial and executive sides of things. One set of people of different grades did the work, and another set of

people provided the money. It was the financiers who called the tune. They controlled the advertisements and decided what the public wanted. Practically, they decided what the public should have.

That explained something that had often puzzled him. Wherever he went, into shops, to the theater, in the train, he was struck by the fact that people were better than their jobs. They could do better work than they did. On the other hand, he heard nothing but grumbling from the public: rotten boots, beastly beer, silly play, abominable train service. Now he thought he saw the reason. Between the people who could do better work and the public that wanted better things stood the financial person who controlled the concern.

Half consciously, he began to make observations. There was that question of advertising, for example. At best it was directed toward overcoming resistance instead of encouraging an instinctive demand. But that was not the worst. In many cases it must actually increase the resistance. Bad as things were, they were not nearly so bad as the advertisements made out. Pictures on the hoardings assured him that only the most imbecile or offensive people could tolerate somebody's collars,

clothes, tobacco, play, or whatever it might be; but when by accident, ignorance or laziness he was induced to try the article, he found that often enough it was not half bad. Indeed, the first step toward buying anything was overcoming the prejudice against it created by the advertisement. George could not believe that he was singular in this respect; he knew he was not. When, down in Chelsea, he talked to some of the artists who made the pictures on the hoardings he found that they shared his opinion. But when he asked them why they did not draw more attractive people they said: "My dear chap, they won't have them; that's their idea of the public"—"they" meaning the people who commissioned the writing of the advertisements.

The subject fascinated him, and he found that it worked out in all sorts of curious ways. If, on his way to the Mansion House, he was faced by the contents-bills of two evening papers, and one said: "Blank Case: Result," and the other: "Blank found Guilty," he found that he always instinctively bought the second. When he came to reason it out he found that it was because he unconsciously assumed that the paper that made no secret of its news must be the better worth reading.

The other traded on an uncertainty, which could be settled at a glance. Altogether newspapers were an interesting study. Generally they were bad, and their readers despised them; and yet the men who wrote for them were extraordinarily capable. Talking to these men, George learned that editors were getting less and less power, and managers — who represented the financial side — more and more. Everything seemed to confirm George's belief that the real Old Man of the Sea on the back of modern industry was the financial person. It was true that he found the money, but he also prevented its being used to the best advantage, chiefly because he relied on generalizations about the public. The people who did the work or who came in personal contact with the customer knew and could do better, but they were not allowed to make use of their knowledge and powers. Whenever George remembered Shelmerdine's use of the word "economical" he laughed aloud.

As yet his observations were analytical and destructive, but he felt that presently they would become synthetical and constructive. How he did not know; he certainly did not feel drawn to any particular branch of commerce or manufacture, and he knew that until he found his game he could

not make practical use of his observations. The only thing he felt sure about was that he was more interested in the way things were done than in the way money was invested.

CHAPTER XII

MRS. GLANVILLE attended to his social education. She took him about and gave him introductions to all sorts of people. He got to know, not only Bayswater, but something of the solemn squares to the eastward and the more modest fringes of Mayfair and Westminster. Kensington he learned through Mrs. Dove, and with Darragh he explored Bloomsbury and Chelsea. Shelmerdine and Tom Burchell brought him in touch with other worlds. He found them all interesting and amusing, and in them all he preserved a certain detachment. He had no more found his world than he had found his game. But though he did not give himself away, he was a sympathetic listener, and people told him what they wanted, as distinct from what they were supposed to want. He heard what they really thought about the plays, newspapers, restaurants and shops that they supported for want of something better, and he came to the conclusion that nearly all the generalizations about the public taste were untrue.

Every now and then he came upon something being done, generally in a small way, about as well as it could be done. From the first he had been struck by Mrs. Glanville's clothes, and he learned that she was considered to be a very well-dressed woman. Men in particular admired her; they didn't know what it was, but she always looked smart. Mrs. Glanville encouraged George to notice her clothes; she said it was part of a liberal education. He always supposed that she got them in Paris, but one day when he said so, she laughed and said:

"Not a bit of it. Promise you won't tell?"

He said that he wouldn't, and she said:

"From Kate Flanders; a little person in Hanover Square. Would you like to meet her?"

George laughed, and said that he wasn't particularly keen about it, but Mrs. Glanville said:

"It'll be an experience. I daren't take you there, because Kate Flanders hates men with an exceeding bitter hatred. That's what makes her an artist. But I'll ask her to tea, and you shall come in by accident."

When he saw Kate Flanders, George understood that "little person" referred to her condition and not her size. She was tall and slight, with the

most tragic face he had ever seen. She made him understand what was meant by "a wreck of a woman," though she was good-looking, and if he had met her in the street he would have supposed her to be insane. To himself he called her "Medusa."

At first she was hostile, and he could hear her cup chattering in the saucer as her hands trembled with suppressed anger, but he was tactfully disinterested and presently Mrs. Glanville got her to talk. Kate Flanders struck him as remarkably cynical. With slow venomous articulation, she talked about some of her customers. It seemed to him that she knew and with cold calculation played upon every strange instinct that had ever been aroused in him by the bodies of women. What he had feared and suppressed she made the basis of her art. He was repelled and yet curiously interested.

When she had gone, with a malignant bow to him that he felt was not personally intended, but due to his sex, Mrs. Glanville said:

"I believe the odd creature rather liked you. What I wanted you to see was that Kate Flanders really does 'dress to kill'. If she didn't do it that way, upon my word I believe she would do it

with a knife or bombs." George asked the reason, but Mrs. Glanville said: "Kate's history is simply not to be told. What you see is the result. I'm lucky enough to be one of her favorites, chiefly, I believe, because she thinks I'm not quite respectable. She dresses Maude Stuart, you know. If you were happily married and took your wife to her, Kate would be quite capable of wilful botching."

"That's why she's only a little person, I suppose," said George.

"Not altogether," said Mrs. Glanville. "You see, with the rent she has to pay, she can't afford to do much advertising, and — it's selfish, of course — her customers naturally don't advertise for her."

George said he was surprised that none of the big firms had snapped up Miss Flanders, but Mrs. Glanville said:

"They're too stupid, my dear man. And if they did, they wouldn't have the sense to give her a free hand. Kate under orders would be just ordinary. It would be like telling a soldier to kill, but not allowing him to aim straight."

It all jumped with George's general ideas, and he put Kate Flanders away in his mind along with Mr. Lindrop as a tantalizing problem. The association amused him.

Altogether, George was having a very full and interesting life in London. He was getting on well at the bank, though Mr. Baldwin didn't know what to make of him. It was almost a grievance to Mr. Baldwin that a young man who didn't take banking seriously should be punctual, careful and methodical. Shelmerdine was clearly convinced that George was what he called a "boy-oh," and his attitude to him was "You might tell a fellow." Mr. Spaul predicted that George would yet return to the simple life.

Friendly as he remained with Darragh, George did not see him very often. Darragh was working hard, and he had his own set, which included Mary Festing. Sometimes George had the odd idea that a part of himself was in Darragh's and Mary's keeping; a part that he didn't need in his ordinary occupations and amusements. It was as if they took it out at intervals and talked about it rather regretfully. At least that was the impression he got when he met them together. Then he was conscious of a slight check to his well-being, and he was inclined to say: "Bother Mary Festing!" She reminded him of the uncomfortable person who said "Remember!" He could never get rid of the idea that Mary knew everything he did. It

was not that he wanted to do anything wrong, but the consciousness of an unseen watcher coming upon him in mixed company was apt to be sobering. It made him unaccountably dry up.

George had the usual temptations of a healthy, high-spirited young man more or less at large in London, and he knew that what kept him straight was less his own virtue, or the material supervision of Mrs. Dove, than the idea of Mary Festing. He had no wish to go wrong, but he a little resented the idea that he couldn't if he wished. He said to himself: "She's nothing to me," very much as in childhood he had been prompted to throw sticks at the Waterfall.

He had kept his promise of going to see Eleanor Markham, and at intervals repeated the visit. Each time he went rather unwillingly, as from a sense of duty, but each time he was glad he had gone, because he felt renewed, as if he had been dipped in the waters of youth. Mr. Markham was now very infirm, and Eleanor devoted her life to him. George understood from Mary that when Mr. Markham died, Eleanor would go into a convent, and this confirmed his boyish impression that she was like the Holy Women. At first he had been a little afraid that Eleanor would talk to him about

religion, which would have been embarrassing, because, without any definite loss of faith, his religious ideas were now in a rather chaotic condition. A great many things that were not religious at all came into them. Mary Festing was one, and she was certainly not religious — at any rate, not in Eleanor Markham's way.

But Eleanor Markham did not talk to him about religion. She sat in a garden looking toward the hills, as if it were near the end of the world, and talked to him with quiet humor about his life in London. Without being critical, she seemed to reduce things to order, as if she viewed them from a little height. Eleanor was the only person to whom George spoke about his mother. She said: "Be patient with her; love has many disguises." He felt, somehow, that the remark was intended to bear a wider application than the immediate one.

George had not yet been out of England, but during his third year in London Darragh asked him to go to Paris. This was in May, and consequently the matter would need some arrangement. Mr. Baldwin had no objection to his taking his holidays thus early in the year, but George thought that he had better write to his father. His mother answered the letter. She wrote more affectionately

than usual. His father left the matter entirely in Mr. Baldwin's hands, and she was glad that George was going to see something of the world. She herself had been to Paris on her honeymoon, and it had been May. He was to take particular note of the Madeleine Church and the Cemetery of Père Lachaise, because she remembered them well. In her happiness at her marriage, she had laid a flower out of her wedding-wreath upon the tomb of Abelard and Heloise. At the end of her letter she spoke of not having been very well lately. Doctor Fleetwood did not think it was anything serious, but recommended the sea, and they were going to Clevedon in June. It was a long time since she had been to the sea. In a postscript she sent her love to Miles. He must come down to Bourneside before long.

Something in the tone of his mother's letter made George hesitate. He felt that she wanted him, but did not care to say so directly. He was half inclined to show the letter to Darragh, and when, afterward, he came to consider the reason why he did not, he knew that it was because he was afraid that Darragh would say: "Go to her." Darragh never made mistakes about feeling. At the time George reassured himself; if his mother had been

seriously unwell, his father would have written. Still, he was uncomfortably reminded of the trembling shadow of her face on the wall, and he said to himself that the next time he went home he would ask her forgiveness for his boyish hardness. He could explain now what had caused it.

The two young men put up at a quaintly-named *Hôtel des Ecoles Coloniales et d'Architecture* in a narrow street off the *Boulevard Montparnasse*. George sent the address home at once, and for the first two days in Paris he rather tried Darragh's patience by returning to the hotel at intervals to see if there were any letters for him. None came, and in the novelty of his surroundings he began to make light of his apprehensions. But on the fourth day he came in at eleven o'clock in the morning to find a letter from his father. His mother had had a slight paralytic seizure. She was conscious, however, and Doctor Fleetwood had good hopes of her recovery. But the almost apologetic suggestion that he should come home told George that his father was anxious, and he immediately made preparations to catch the midday train. Darragh insisted on coming with him, and on the heart-breaking journey tried to reassure him by saying that if there had been any change for the worse, Mr. Tracy

would have wired. He pointed out that the seizure had taken place on the very day they left London. But George was not comforted. In everything he saw his father's practical mind. He would prepare him while there was yet time; but if it were too late, he would see the tragic futility of despatching a telegram.

George was right. When they reached Cardigan Square, he found, not a telegram, but a letter to tell him that his mother died the day before. "I knew you would come at once," wrote his father, "and I wished to spare you the blow in a strange place."

George read the letter in the presence of Mrs. Dove and Darragh. He gave it to the former without speaking, and walked out of the room and aimlessly up to his bedroom. He could not cry. After a moment he went down-stairs again, and going up to Darragh in the dining-room, put his hands on his shoulders and said: "I'm sorry, old chap." At the time he did not know why he did this, but afterward he knew that it was because Darragh was the cause of his going to Paris. Mrs. Dove put her arms about him, and he instinctively kissed her, but he did not cry. Then he heard the sound of Mr. Mahon's latch-key at the front

door, and left the room again. All his thoughts were upon the surface of a central deadness.

Darragh followed him up-stairs and reminded him that there was a train from Paddington at nine o'clock. His mother was to be buried in the morning. At first George felt disinclined to go. "I can't tell her now," he said.

But Darragh said: "They will be expecting you," and then it seemed to George that the susceptibilities of other people had become immensely important.

Darragh went with him to Paddington. The only thing George said to him on the way was: "At any rate, she sent her love to you." He could not get it out of his head that Darragh was the person to be pitied, and he hoped that he would not break down.

But Darragh did not break down. He said gently, "Yes, give her mine"; and George said that he would, adding that he wished they had had time to go to Père Lachaise.

For the first part of the train journey to Barstow George was alone with a heart that was too numb for grief, but at Reading a young man got into his compartment. He was thin, dark and clean-shaved, and extraordinarily restless. From his appearance he might have been a bookmaker or a

music-hall actor. He changed his seat, closed and opened the window, shuffled his feet, whistled and snapped his fingers. Presently, as if in desperation, he began to talk, making little foolish jokes, with puns and wilful mispronunciations. George bore him in a dazed sort of way, answering his questions at random; but at last, in a crisis of nerves, told him to shut up. The effect was greater than he intended. The very mobile face of the young man went through a dozen changes of expression: resentment, surprise, perplexity and abject humiliation. At another time George would have been amused, but now he was deeply touched. With clairvoyant sympathy he understood that the creature who now stammered a servile apology had been unable to bear his own company. It was the first time George had been made to realize the terror of loneliness. He put out his hand and murmured something, he knew not what, but the young man was only alarmed, and at the first stopping-place removed himself.

The last local train had gone when George reached Barstow, but he was able to cover part of his journey by tram-car. With a dead heart in his breast, he fancied that the few passengers looked at him compassionately. It was as if he had only

just discovered the human brotherhood that lies beneath the indifference of individuals. Even the boy conductor who put him off at the journey's end in an unfinished suburb did so reluctantly, as if he were loath to commit a fellow creature to the night from the warm lamplight of the car.

When beyond the farthest lamp the sweet May night embraced him, with stealing odors and the sighing of trees, George at last knew grief. It was as if he had come back to childhood after long wandering among strangers, and with every turn of the familiar road the sense of loss was deepened. But since the loss was altogether his, while his mother was at rest, his tears flowed easily and brought relief. Once more he was a child going crying to his mother. From some far peace she smiled at him with the half-amused tenderness that mothers give to the sorrows of childhood.

Long before he came within sound of the Waterfall, he could make out the dark lift of the Down where the church lay. It seemed to him that a mild light shone from the church. At first he thought it must be fancy, but as he drew nearer he saw that the light was real.

Then he understood. Following custom, they would have taken his mother to the church, and

Walter or Amelia would keep vigil. That relieved him of what in the sanctity of his grief had been a vexation: the necessity of speech with the living. Now he could go to his mother in the church.

Even the Waterfall seemed hushed, as if not to betray him as he moved quickly under the long dark wall of the sleeping house. Now he was walking beside the Bourne, and the church was hidden by the hanging wood that presently would become the harp of dawn.

It was long past midnight when he came to the church. He opened the jarring gate and passed up the long path in an odor of yew. Then he saw that the dim light that he had seen from afar glowed through the window of the Resurrection, and he was strangely comforted. But when he entered the porch and gently turned the heavy ring of the door, he found that the door was locked. Fancying he heard a frightened movement within, he desisted. If Amelia were there alone at this hour of the night, she would naturally be alarmed.

The strange thing was that, after the first disappointment, he was not unduly grieved at finding the door locked against him. It seemed to him somehow just that even at the last he should be kept from the full confidence that he had denied

his mother. He could fancy her knowing him there and smiling almost mischievously in her coffin; as when in childhood he had been stood in the corner, she had smiled at him because, though the immediate offense was expiated by tears, the time for official pardon was not yet come. A certain playfulness in the strict observance of rules had always been her strongest hold upon him. In the nearness that he now felt, the locked door was only a light formality.

After an interval he tried the door again, and murmured "Amelia" against the wood, but, receiving no answer, came to the conclusion that his mother was really alone. That pleased him, and he now felt almost happy. Being very tired, he lay down on the thick rough mat in the porch, with his head against the door, and half dozed, with light dreams in which the sense of communication was intensified. Soon after three he woke, to find that the space of sky framed by the outer arch of the porch had lightened. One lark began to sing from an infinite height, and then another, until several were raining down their music, and very soon cuckoos began to call in the distance. Enchanted by the beauty of the morning, he rose to stretch his chilled limbs, and walked a little

way up the road. The night was lifting like a gray curtain, and in the young light an abandoned quarry took on the dignity of a mountain landscape. Below, great elms stood mistily in the green fields, and the white road curved among the folds of the land like a river of dreams. Here and there smoke rose from chimneys. Close at hand the keen air was full of the scent of lilacs from a garden, and of white broom which grew along the edges of the quarry.

Since he was last here an extension of the railway had been opened behind the church, and the sharp contrast between old and new seemed, somehow, in keeping with his mood. At the very edge of the line a gray farmhouse, with high gables and the characteristic Severnshire chimneys, stood among tall still poplars. In the distance he heard a train, and he waited by the new bridge until it came rushing by, hot life in that exquisite hour. It reminded him that life went on, and he knew that his life was to be more gravely happy than before. He had learned the meaning of "Too late," with its moral for the future.

When he returned to the church the window of the Resurrection had paled, but its assurance was in his heart. He waited contentedly in the awaken-

ing day until, as he expected, Walter and Amelia came up with Mr. Mostyn to early celebration. They wondered to see him there, but in that atmosphere explanations were soon made. Mr. Mostyn had not allowed Amelia to watch after midnight.

Admitted at last to the presence of his mother, George knew that he must not feel remorse. On either side of the flower-covered coffin the great candles burned low and pale, but steadily. It was as if she smiled. In the vicarious communion he knew that the official pardon had been given; there was a deeper peace between them than when they had shared the elements together.

Everything that followed was unimportant and easy to be borne. His active peace was answered by the stoicism of his father, and the imperative necessity of food redeemed the banality of breakfast. They broke bread together. It seemed to George that whatever emotion his father felt was expressed in the vertical line between his brows; cut now as if with a chisel. From his father he learned that his mother's death was entirely unexpected. Her letter, with its faint appeal and message to Darragh, as if she were gathering up the ends of things, must have been inspired by a

premonition; Mr. Tracy did not even know that she had spoken to George of being unwell.

It was only at the very end that George broke down utterly. The falling of earth on the coffin, the material reminder of irrevocable parting, knocked at his heart, and he began to sob hysterically. His father, standing motionless, with the line deepening between his brows as he stared across the grave, put his arm about him. In the pressure of it George felt support craved rather than given, and that steadied him. For the first time in his life he knew that he was needed.

CHAPTER XIII

FEELING that his father wanted him at home, and finding that Walter had the same idea, George engineered an exchange with one of the Barstow clerks, without the appearance of making a sacrifice. He was struck by the alteration in his father. Outwardly he kept up the stoical demeanor that made him look like a Norse hero, but some inner support seemed lacking. He was, in the old phrase, "a stricken man." Husband and wife had never been demonstrative in their affection, there was little real understanding between them, and she was by far the weaker of the two; and yet after her death the strong man gradually declined. He had been dependent on her in ways that he knew nothing about. His one wish now seemed to be to gather his family about him. George observed that, though he made no alteration in his habits in respect of religion, he was very anxious that nothing should interfere with the religious exercises of his children. It was his offering upon the altar of memory.

At first George found the change into provincial life amusing. It was all so complete, so highly graded and organized; so under the eye at once, like the life of a small principality. Barstow had grown, and the sharp division between town and country was dissolving in a ring of suburbs, in which the amenities flourished. Cleeve, on its high Down to the westward, still maintained a special character, by reason of a retired military population attracted by the waters and the college, and beyond Bourneside there was still the county; but, partly through associations formed by the younger generation at the college and the high schools, Barstow was climbing up into Cleeve and planting itself out in the county. In the last, resistance had weakened at the very core. The old duke was dead, and the new duchess was a young woman of ideas. With some humor, she a little neglected the county, and corrupted Cleeve by taking a house there, and organizing concerts and other entertainments in the assembly rooms, which needed the support of Barstow. After a pause of resentful astonishment, the county was beginning to make the best of it by recoiling upon Cleeve and taking Barstow in the same wave. Called by the court to Cleeve, it was rediscovering Barstow, with a notable ad-

vantage to trade, and a breaking down of barriers between the two places that might otherwise have persisted. To the county Cleeve and Barstow were all one, and Cleeve could not afford to sacrifice the social gain by refusing the support of its more commercial neighbor. The new railway and the shy beginnings of motor-cars made access convenient, and here and there a marriage consummated the friendly relations begun at school.

Some of the currents and cross-currents determined by the new social center of gravity flowed through the bank, and from them and the conversation of his brother and sister George formed his conception of a small principality. If London had not yet waked up to full self-consciousness as a whole, Barstow and its neighborhood were a little too wide-awake, with all sorts of amusing phenomena.

Both Walter and Amelia had the social sense highly developed, and they now found themselves in an unsatisfactory position. The Tracys had settled at Bourneside too late to be absorbed into even the humbler ranks of the county before its awakening to Cleeve. On the other hand, Bourneside was cut off from Cleeve, not only by the whole breadth of Barstow, but by the outward growth

of a suburb. Already, gray villas with slate roofs and freestone bays flanked the road at intervals on either side, nearly to the Barstow end of what had been Gardiner's field, and at any moment the trams might come that way.

Walter and Amelia had too keen a sense of social values to resent having failed of the county. They positively approved the delay in recognizing newcomers, although as children they had kicked at the exclusiveness of the Archery Club. Besides, it didn't matter now. Since the Dibleys, the boot-manufacturers, had taken Upton Court, and Miss Sherry, of Sherry and Dobbs, had married into the Purefoys, of Queenscote, nobody really worried about the county. But Walter and Amelia felt their separation from Cleeve. They were not snobbish, but they liked society. At Bourneside they were out of everything, and Bourneside was going to be spoiled, anyhow. Unlike George, they had never loved Bourneside for its own sake, but only for its decent seclusion, which was now threatened. Moreover, both Walter and Amelia had formed sentimental alliances in Cleeve, he with a daughter of the navy, she with a captain of engineers. They went into Cleeve a good deal, and were free of its amenities, but then there was

the bother of getting home again. Cleeve was their destiny, and they murmured that coming to Bourne-side had been a mistake.

Father, of course, was hopeless. He thought of nothing but cabbages. By this time, even George was prepared to admit to himself — though not to the others — that as an idealist his father was unpractical. He had commenced landowner at the end of the landowning epoch. Private ownership in land might, and probably would, go on for another generation as a convenience, but it was no longer worth considering as an ideal. England was not going to be saved with cabbages. But even a convenience may be husbanded faithfully or unfaithfully, and George never wavered in his admiration of his father's reverence for the land. Particularly since he had gleaned that, before he was able to indulge it, he must have made some sacrifices for what Mrs. Glanville called the "bee in his bonnet."

Whether his ideal was practical or not, it gave him a dignity and a security that won the instinctive respect of even those who regarded him as a bit of a crank and a bit of a bore. Nor was it entirely without practical result. Mr. Tracy not only dealt faithfully with his own property, but by precept and

example he had greatly improved the general level of agriculture in his immediate neighborhood. It was mainly through his influence that local farmers were turning their attention to market-gardening, and it was a private grief to him that salvation by means of jam had been proposed by a Liberal statesman, and not by one of his own side. To encourage the others he stolidly sent produce from Bourneside into the Barstow market—to the disgust of Walter, even carrying it himself in the trap when they drove to the bank in the morning; embroiled himself with the railway company over the question of rates; gave prizes for the best-kept allotments, and was chairman of the local Farmers' Club.

But he would have nothing to do with any association that was not, in his view, severely practical. He persistently declined the office of magistrate, and took no part in politics. "I'm not a talker," was his answer to all attempts to enlist him. This was not said out of scorn for talkers; indeed, one of his most endearing traits to George was his pathetic belief in the wisdom and honesty of those who represented the agricultural interest with their tongues, or, as he said, "skirmished in front."

Since his wife's death, however, Mr. Tracy had

begun laboriously to compile a *Yeoman's Year Book* upon the results of his experience, and some of George's happiest hours were spent in advising upon the English of it. George doubted if the book would have any great value for the future, but it was at least an interesting record of the past, full of good sense and acute observations.

Often when they left the bank, Walter would remain in Cleeve to bicycle home at a late hour with Amelia; and after the things had been cleared away, George and his father, spectacles lending a curious mildness to the latter, would sit in the lamplit dining-room over their literary task. George's moderate skill with words was a constant source of wonder to his father.

"You ought to have been a writer, George," he would say, with slight anxiety at the idea that George was being wasted in the bank, and George would reassure him by saying that there was plenty of time for that.

Sometimes, Mr. Tracy would talk, not sentimentally, but in a tone of speculation, about his wife.

"You seem to be a pretty even mixture," he said one evening; "your mother was romantic, while I have always been very practical. I can see both sides in you. Your mother had a habit

of hoarding up useless things for the sake of their associations — letters, ribbons, your first shoes, flowers, and so on. I found a whole collection of such trifles. In some cases I could remember the circumstances, in others I could not. There were the broken remains of an iris wrapped in paper and dated May, 1881. That must have been about the time you went to St. Piran's."

"It was a flower I wouldn't give her," said George quietly. "May I have it?"

"Certainly, you may," said his father. "I would like you each to keep some little thing to remember her by. . . . I ought to have grown more flowers," he added, after a pause; "she loved flowers."

Every morning George drove with his father into Barstow. Sometimes Walter accompanied them, but as a rule he bicycled — to spare the pony, he said, but, George believed, to escape the indignity of plums or tomatoes. At the bank, George was in a more confidential position than he had occupied in London, but less in touch with the world. Here he was definitely the son of one of the partners, learning the business in all its branches rather than performing any particular one of them. Except for the light it gave upon the general problems

that interested him, he found the work unexciting and largely a matter of routine, but Barstow was a new and absorbing experience.

Here he had the whole scheme of things under the eye at once. Barstow being a port and a manufacturing center as well, he was able to follow the fortunes of many raw materials from the ship to the shop. The "bales of merchandise" of his childhood, with their appeal to the imagination, were every-day realities, to be handled on the quays and estimated with the more precise knowledge of a man. As Mr. Tracy said, George was romantic; but he was romantic about realities, and it seemed to him that most of the transformations between the ship and the shop were a missing of possibilities and a degradation of values. Color and richness from East and West, dumped on the quays, became flat banality in the windows. Meanwhile human beings were hungering for color and richness. He was reminded of the Spanish proverb: "God sends the food and the devil cooks it," and of the saying: "Sad to think that in a few years' time all these fine lads would be frivolous members of parliament." He was not prepared to say exactly where the degradation took place; something must be allowed for the difference between seeing things

in bulk and in detail, and in the transformation from the general to the particular some loss of quality was only to be expected; but he refused to believe that the finished article — whether it were something to eat, something to wear, or something to look at — need be so far below the promise of the stuff.

It was not from lack of human capacity in handling the stuff. Down here he had better opportunities than in London of seeing how things were done, and the relations between one branch of industry and another. He spent a good deal of his leisure loafing about factories and workshops and talking to the men, and he was often astonished at the degree of skill employed in various processes. But it was often employed in sophistication, not necessarily dishonest. People couldn't let the stuff alone. They messed it up with alien flavors or "took the plain look off" with meaningless decoration. He recalled a reflection that had come into his head when he watched the artist painting the Waterfall; the alluring richness of the colors in the box, their poverty when spread upon the paper. He had heard Darragh say: "Learning to paint is learning what not to do." Well, that seemed to apply to everything.

Thinking about it, he was struck by the number of apparently unnecessary people engaged in distribution. Each acted as a sort of filter, setting a slightly lower standard than the preceding one. You had a better choice in the wholesale dealer's than in the retail shop. At the same time, there could be no doubt that other people besides himself were conscious of the degradation of values. There were the advertisements for "wholemeal" bread, for American cereals, "containing all the elements necessary for building, nourishing and sustaining the human body," for "raw" silk and "natural" wool. Rightly or wrongly, there was a deep human instinct for the stuff with all its possibilities retained. For himself, he was prepared to admit that the feeling was mainly esthetic — romance on the quays, banality in the windows; but he had a strong suspicion that the esthetic feeling was as good a practical guide as any other. He had observed, among other things, that the general tendency of mechanical invention was toward the direct transmission of power; to tap the mysterious forces of nature in their purity. He never traveled in a trolley-car but he felt the urgency of the heavens.

Except his father, George had no intimate com-

panions, though he made plenty of acquaintances. He joined Walter's club in Cleve, played tennis and cultivated the families of his future brother-and sister-in-law. He was not conscious of holding himself aloof, though he understood from Amelia that he was considered rather supercilious. All that he was aware of was that he liked people better at work than at play, and that his regard for them increased in proportion as they were interested in their jobs. This led him to make friends in unexpected places, and one of the humors of the luncheon-hour was Walter's look of concern at his brother's queer company of the moment. Associations that would have passed unnoticed in London were glaring upon the smooth organization of provincial life.

George found the provincial young woman of his own class an amusing study. In so far as she was a sportsman, a partner at tennis or dances, he liked her, but, though noisily asserting the contrary, she wouldn't be content with that. Desperately unsentimental, she had nevertheless the keenest eye for those relations that are supposed to be based on sentiment. In speech, dress and manner, she ignored the distinctions between man and woman, but never forgot that he was a possible

husband and she a possible wife. Nor did this seem to proceed from a wish for what social critics called "loveless marriage". Directly an engagement was achieved, sentiment was unloosed with a fervor and a freedom that, as illustrated between Amelia and her young man and Walter and his young woman, filled George with mingled wonder and embarrassment. Assuming that the young people liked sentiment, the idea seemed to be: "Business first, pleasure afterward"; and at the back of his mind, George had a vague feeling that it was all of a piece with the tendency to think of prices before values. In practise it bored him. He didn't want to make love, but still less did he want to form or to discuss relations in which love-making was an afterthought.

He missed Darragh badly, though the practise of writing to him and to Mrs. Glanville undoubtedly helped him to formulate his ideas on things in general. Not that Darragh was very responsive about things in general, but that, as George knew, he read George's letters to Mary Festing. George would have liked to write to Mary, but could not find a pretext sufficiently remote from the wish to have a letter from her. He could not bring himself to write: "Dear Mary." She sent him messages

through Darragh, and he could feel that she was interested in what he said, though sometimes her comments gave him the impression that she thought he was trying to be clever. That was not true, though, short of the simplicity which would have given too much of himself away, he had to be rather elaborate in his form of expression. After all, it did not matter what Mary thought of him so long as he heard about her. Darragh sent him the magazines in which her poems and stories appeared; she was now writing her first novel.

CHAPTER XIV

AT Bourneside the person he saw most of was Mr. Mostyn. A little grayer and stouter, the vicar was still rushing about, with belt flying wide, and bigger pipes and heavier boots than ever. Lately a new poet had rediscovered the glory of maleness, and Mr. Mostyn was one of his noisiest disciples. He exploded with the slang of the barrack-room, played the recruiting sergeant among the young men, and divided his congregation into approving and disapproving halves by flinging down sanguinary quotations from the pulpit. George liked some of the new poet's writings, though it struck him as rather odd that young women and clergymen should be the people most impressed by his glorification of maleness. He understood that Darragh and Mary were not so impressed, though they admired the poet for other reasons.

George being the only young man of his class immediately available — for Walter was too much occupied in Cleeve — he was “hoicked out of that,” to use Mr. Mostyn's expression, in the name of the

new gospel to captain village louts at cricket on the common. He didn't mind the cricket, and he liked some of the louts, but he wished that Mr. Mostyn wouldn't make such a point of his being a public schoolboy. After all, cricket had been played on village commons for several generations. Then Mr. Mostyn discovered that he had a good baritone voice, and enlisted him in the choir.

This, after the first shyness, became a pleasure. George loved music, and though the capacities of the choir and Mr. Mostyn's preference for a "hearty service" did not allow any great subtlety of execution, the very fact of singing a part made him feel impersonal and so able to let himself go. The near neighborhood of the organ gave him confidence; the look of the serried pipes recalled the fir-wood at the edge of the Camp, and the color of stained glass was oddly one with sound. In this atmosphere emotion became a relief instead of an embarrassment.

Soon after George joined the choir there was a new organist; a Mrs. Lorimer, whose husband was an insurance agent. The Lorimers had lately taken part of the dwelling-house of the mill between the Waterfall and the Grove, and people said that there was something odd about them, probably be-

cause they did not associate with their neighbors. Mrs. Lorimer seemed superior to her husband, and it was said that she was a doctor's daughter. She was a good-looking dark woman of about thirty, with high cheek-bones and a pretty Scotch accent. Amelia said that she dressed above her station. The first thing that George noticed about Mrs. Lorimer was that she always used the same scent; it was pervasive rather than powerful and aroused his curiosity by suggesting something beyond. He described Mrs. Lorimer to himself as a lurking person; but compared to Mary Festing she was a lurking warmth instead of a lurking coolness. Little as he knew about music, he recognized that she was a good organist; she let it out instead of making it, was the way he described her playing. The previous organist had also been a woman, but until now it had never seemed as if there were a woman in the chancel. Mrs. Lorimer belonged to the atmosphere created by the colored glass and the sound of the organ.

For the sermon Mrs. Lorimer left the organ bench and sat on a rush chair half-screened by a curtain. Occasionally George became conscious that she was looking at him across the chancel, but when he met her eyes she looked away without

embarrassment, so that he concluded it was merely the accident of position. But once she maintained her glance for a second or two with an expression that he could not interpret. It made him feel slightly uncomfortable, but did not repel him. After that he was conscious of trying not to look at Mrs. Lorimer.

So far he had not spoken to her, though he had listened to her talking to Mr. Mostyn at choir practise on Thursday evenings. Mrs. Lorimer had nothing to do with training the choir, but there were good-humored arguments between her and the vicar about the choice of music. Mr. Mostyn wanted "all British" music. So far as the singing was concerned he more or less had his way, but he could not persuade Mrs. Lorimer to abandon "foreign stuff" for her voluntaries. The foreign stuff, as George knew, was Bach, Mozart, and occasionally, to his delight, Beethoven. These discussions at the end of choir practise interested George, though he did not take part in them. Usually most of the choir had gone, and the lamps were put out, leaving only the candles at the organ, and producing an atmosphere of intimacy in which Mr. Mostyn's maleness and Mrs. Lorimer's femininity, intensified by her character-

istic, persistent perfume and soft, slightly burring voice, were strongly contrasted. One evening she suddenly appealed to George for support, with: "Isn't it, Mr. Tracy?" On the preceding Sunday she had played for the offertory at choral celebration the *Ave Verum* out of Mozart's *Requiem Mass*, and the vicar quoted it as an example of the music he disliked. George agreed with Mrs. Lorimer that it was beautiful and appropriate. Mr. Mostyn said: "Oh, he's a dreamer," and Mrs. Lorimer, turning away, said, without emphasis, "Ah, he knows."

George's and Mrs. Lorimer's way home was in the same direction, but they had never walked together. Mrs. Lorimer left the churchyard by the gate into the road, either alone or with some of the young women who sat in the body of the church for choir practise, while George went down through the vicarage garden with Mr. Mostyn, sometimes going into the vicarage for a smoke and a chat. Below the vicarage the two ways joined, and one October night on reaching the corner George saw Mrs. Lorimer just ahead of him. He caught her up and she said: "Oh, it's you, Mr. Tracy," as if in surprise, though he was inclined to believe that she had loitered.

Going down the hill they talked about Mr. Mostyn. "Isn't he a Goth?" said Mrs. Lorimer, and George agreed, though he felt it necessary to add something about the vicar's good qualities. Mrs. Lorimer said: "Oh, of course. Please don't think that I don't respect Mr. Mostyn. What I meant was that he has no sympathy with — well, with the things we care about."

George was flattered by the plural; it implied that she had been thinking about him. Grateful for the opportunity, he began to talk rather impulsively about the music he loved, mentioning the concerts he had been to in London. Mrs. Lorimer listened sympathetically, murmuring: "Of course, of course," as if she quite understood his feelings. "I expect you are rather lonely, down here," she said, and then he suddenly realized that he was, though he said that he found plenty of things to amuse him.

During the earlier part of the day, and the day before, it had rained heavily, and when they reached the bottom of the hill they found that while they had been in church the Bourne had overflowed, and for twenty yards or so the road was at least ankle deep in water. If George had been alone he would have splashed through gaily, for he knew

that for the rest of the way home the ground was higher. It would be more than an hour before the flood by the smithy could be any serious depth.

But Mrs. Lorimer hesitated. In order to get home dry-shod she would have to make a *détour* across fields. George felt that he could not very well desert her now, but he was not keen enough about her company to welcome the lengthened walk in the dark. Hardly thinking, he said: "I'll carry you across."

She laughed nervously, and said: "But can you?"

That settled it, and without answering, he stooped and picked her up. It pleased him that she did not make any fuss, or show any fear, real or affected, but remained passive in his arms with hers lightly resting on his shoulders as he splashed through the water, which was nearly up to his knees at the deepest part. While carrying her he was conscious of trying to think what the scent she used reminded him of, but it escaped him.

"How strong you are!" she said when he put her down. He laughed awkwardly, for he was beginning to feel shy now, and for a little way they walked in silence.

"I often wonder what you are thinking about

in the sermon," said Mrs. Lorimer presently. It was near enough to their previous conversation not to seem unduly personal, and George said: "Oh, nothing of any consequence. As Mr. Mostyn says, I'm afraid I am a bit of a wool-gatherer."

She made a little sound of impatience and said: "Ah, he doesn't understand you."

The implication was that she did, but George was not yet quite ready to take full advantage of her sympathy, and for the rest of the walk he kept the conversation off himself.

When they parted, just above the smithy, leaving her only the high field opposite the Bournside Orchard to walk alone, Mrs. Lorimer said:

"I wish you'd let me try your voice, some time. I believe something might be done with it."

George said something about having no time, but she went on, steadily, "I teach music, you know — not singing, but the piano. But I know enough about singing to give you some hints. You might come to the church before choir practise — or I am at home nearly every afternoon."

Recognizing that she was not asking him to become a paying pupil, George felt that it would be ungracious to refuse, and he said he would go to the mill the next Thursday afternoon — when he

came home early from the bank. "At any rate you can play for me," he said.

"That will be splendid," said Mrs. Lorimer. "Well, good night. Thank you for preserving me from the flood. I shall have to call you Saint George."

He was left uncertain whether or not she was making fun of his solemnity, and whether or not he liked her. He felt vaguely that there was something wrong about Mrs. Lorimer, but when he tried to find a reason it was only because she was so different from Mary Festing, who was the only other woman who had aroused his curiosity. Mary would not have let him carry her through the water. Not that she would have turned back; she would have splashed through the water at his side. The thing about Mary was that she would go anywhere with you at any time without regard for consequences or criticism. It was only about herself that she would be nice. Then he said: "Bother Mary Festing!" He had never held a woman so close before, and the memory was pleasant; he fancied that the scent of her was still upon him.

When he went in he spoke to the others about having had to walk through the water, but he said nothing about having carried Mrs. Lorimer.

Somehow he felt sure that she would not speak of it to anybody, and the thought pleased him. He went to bed with the sense of having had a little adventure.

On Thursday afternoon Mrs. Lorimer was so relentlessly professional about his voice that he felt a little humiliated, as if he had romanced about her. "No, no, stupid," she said, with evident unconsciousness of taking a liberty; "you must breathe deeper. Watch me. Now, put your hands here."

There was not a trace of self-consciousness in her as she held his hands to her sides. With respect, he knew that he was dealing with that savage utilitarian, the artist.

When she left the piano, however, her manner changed. It was as if she had put aside a personality with which she could not trifle. Her eyes, which had been expressionless, now deepened and darkened with the look he could not interpret, and her voice, which had been imperative, now softened into a lazy confidential murmur, with pretty unexpected stresses, as she spoke of the blank Philistinism of country life.

"How you can stand it after London, I don't know," she said.

Remembering the limited circumstances of her

husband, he did not like to ask her how she could. But he wondered why so good a musician, married or not, should live in the country. He would have supposed that she could make more money in town, but she did not seem to have any pupils in Barstow. The cottage which, though quaking in sympathy, was really distinct from the mill, with a separate entrance, indicated slipshod housekeeping with a taste for pretty things. There were too many rags, he thought. The cretonne of the couch under the little curtained window which spied upon the deep glide of the Bourne from under the bridge, wanted washing. Mrs. Lorimer herself, though attractively, was not very neatly dressed. Watching her, he thought that she dressed by instinct, as Mrs. Glanville, with the help of Kate Flanders, dressed with art; she was emphatically but rather crudely feminine.

She was interesting, however; intelligent outside her own subject, and, in a loose way, well acquainted with what was going on in art and literature. Those were the "Yellow Book" days, and her tastes seemed to lie in that atmosphere. She spoke with scorn of the muscular school which excited the admiration of Mr. Mostyn. George did not pretend to be a critic, but he felt that there

must be good on both sides, and suspected that, outside music, Mrs. Lorimer's judgment was not very sound. It was the queerness rather than the goodness that appealed to her. He wished that Darragh was there to put his ideas into words. On second thought, he did not wish that Darragh were there; one side of him was quite at home with Mrs. Lorimer. She was the first woman he had talked to since he left London. Amelia and her friends in Cleeve were pleasant and amusing, but they were not, in any sense of the word that mattered, women.

Mrs. Lorimer persuaded him to stop to tea, which was got by a sulky, dirty little maid, and before they had finished Mr. Lorimer came in. He was a worried-looking man, apparently several years older than his wife, and obviously not her match in general intelligence. George did not like him. He seemed glad to see George; rather too glad for social ease, though Mrs. Lorimer kept his effusiveness within reasonable bounds. It was he and not his wife who hoped that Mr. Tracy would come again; "the wife," as he called her, was rather at a loss for society.

George wished that there were not a Mr. Lorimer. He was interested in Mrs. Lorimer and, whatever

her shortcomings, she knew exactly how to behave in her rather anomalous position. At choir practise that evening she made no difference in her manner to him as a result of the afternoon's visit, though she casually remarked to Mr. Mostyn that she had tried Mr. Tracy's voice and found it promising, "if you don't encourage him to bellow." George began to take notice of how other people spoke of Mrs. Lorimer. He gathered that she was not generally liked, though her playing was appreciated. The only person who seemed to find her interesting as a woman was Mrs. Mostyn. Once when the vicar had come home grumbling at "Mrs. Lorimer's fandangos" on the organ, his wife said, from the sofa:

"That's temperament, my dear Swipes. We're not all so fatiguingly healthy in our tastes as you are. Mrs. Lorimer is a dear, grubby, perverse thing. I'm sure she has a darling vice of some sort. Don't you think so, George?"

George said he didn't know about that, but that he liked Mrs. Lorimer's playing. You couldn't talk seriously to Mrs. Mostyn; she was clever, but too lazy to think what she meant so long as it sounded shocking. Altogether, though it seemed to him rather a pity that a woman like Mrs. Lorimer

should be left without society, he did not see how anybody could help it.

The slight differences that Mrs. Lorimer made between her public and private manner to him were not more than subtly flattering to his intelligence. It was tacitly assumed that they had tastes in common. It was tacitly assumed, also, that Mrs. Lorimer should loiter on her way home from choir practise so that he generally caught her up at the corner. She took him for granted in a way that pleased without disturbing him. Comparing her with Mary Festing, now unwillingly, he said that it was a different side of him she took for granted; a side that Mary, by temperament, could know nothing about and would rather despise if she could. Occasionally he called at the cottage on Thursday or Saturday afternoons, and got Mrs. Lorimer to play to him. On Saturday Mr. Lorimer was generally at home, wrestling pathetically with a dank and overgrown garden that merged into the Grove; and if George's visits were more often on Thursday than Saturday, it was only because he found Mr. Lorimer's effusive hospitality rather tiresome.

With familiarity, the little quaking, overcrowded room, with its characteristic lurking odor and mu-

sical associations, began to haunt him. It had mystery. He found himself looking oftener at Mrs. Lorimer across the chancel and wondering about her. There was a curious contrast between her harsh cheek-bones and soft mouth with its slightly ashamed expression. If she caught his eyes, now, her own answered them, and sometimes she discreetly smiled before she turned away. Occasional personalities seemed to arise naturally out of their tacit understanding. Mrs. Lorimer said: "I was quite right to call you Saint George. You are so English in type, and the window gives you a golden halo," and once in passing she lightly brushed his hair with her hand.

One December afternoon when he called at the cottage he found her restless. She made one or two attempts to play to him, but her attention wandered, and she said, finally: "No, let's talk." Conversation was not a success, however. She knelt before the fire, with her back to him, and aimlessly stirred between the bars. Her uneasiness reacted upon him; until now she had always been self-possessed, though he was often vaguely disturbed in that room. Now he wanted to go and he wanted to stay.

When, with an effort, he rose, she said: "Do

stop to tea. You'll have to help me to get it, though," she added with a laugh; "Lizzie has gone home."

He stayed. In putting cups on the table their hands touched, and they laughed without reason. Over their tea they were both silent, and they avoided each other's eyes. The meal was a mere pretense, though she spasmodically pressed him to eat and drink. He smoked a cigarette while she feverishly bundled the tea-things into the kitchen. They carried on a broken conversation in unnaturally loud voices through the open door. When she returned to the sitting-room, he stood up, and said he really must go.

"Stay a few minutes longer," she said; "I—" but left the sentence unfinished.

George hesitated. "Well —" he began, but forgot what he was going to say. She laughed, picked up a book, put it down again, and came over to where he stood by the window.

"Do sit down," she said, and put out her hand as if to push, but clutched instead. The trembling floor weakened him. He made some inarticulate sound, and she swayed against him, leaning heavily. For a moment he remained passive and then awkwardly put his arm about her.

"What is it?" he murmured huskily.

"You — you know," she gasped, with her forehead on his shoulder.

"I must go," he whispered, and half turned. But she had him now, and straining down his head, with hot lips greedily drank of his youth.

CHAPTER XV.

AFTERWARD she cried, and called herself a bad woman. But he, in the belief that he had taken and not given, protested. She had made a king of him. Kneeling at her side with his arms about her, he poured out in broken endearments the passion she had awakened and fed. If her husband had come in then, George would have claimed her exultantly. She had finally to send him away.

At last he had realized himself. Now he knew the meaning of everything; his childish dreams and aspirations, the vague troubles of his adolescence, the suppressed curiosity of his manhood. This was the secret of the Grove, and he could imagine that the thunder of the Waterfall was the vain threat of jealous powers to frighten him from its discovery. He had found the synthesis of all his nature. Inevitably he thought of Mary Festing in her cold aloofness, and it was with a feeling of triumph. He half wished that she could know.

If it were not love it was so mixed with grati-

tude that it had for him all the effects of love. Slowly roused, he was an ardent lover, and his mistress had to teach him discretion. She was an artist in depravity and made him feel that their passion was somehow part of the mysteries in which they were first associated. Even the meaning of the sanctuary was intensified for him. And with the sense of completion, of life unified, there was the piquancy of contrast; their traffic of eyes during the sermon was discreet as much out of reverence as from fear of discovery, and there was a thrill in keeping at bay in moments of devotion the secret of the quaking scented room.

He knew that he was sinning, of course; he had no theories to justify himself, but that only gave depth to his passion. It was all sad, mad, bad and glorious. He could imagine himself Lancelot, now, with full conviction. His relations with other people were improved; they said he had waked up wonderfully, and was more human. Nobody suspected, though he took a daring delight in speaking of Mrs. Lorimer. He would take her side boldly in arguments with the vicar, and sometimes on leaving the church after choir practise she would walk with them through the vicarage garden. It seemed natural that George should see her home.

Her character kept the thing above a mere indulgence of the flesh. Her talent for music was too real to have been employed as a lure, and he remained impressed by her gravity when she played. If he had not loved music, he would have been jealous of her playing; it was her conscience. Not that she was too easy in her abandonment. She would refuse him, or yield after protest, though always unreservedly. Sometimes he found her oddly agitated, unnaturally flushed and uncertain in her temper.

He did not consider what he should do if their guilt were discovered, though he knew that he would not shirk the consequences. What precautions he took at her desire were less for safety than because they increased his feeling of romance. He liked to approach her cottage through the Grove, to look for the scarf at the little window overlooking the Bourne which told him that she would be alone, before he crossed the little ivied arch of a forgotten builder. It must have been made for some lover's approach, he thought.

The end was brutally sharp. One evening, when he was walking home with Walter from dinner at a neighbor's, Walter said, apropos to nothing:

“Heard about Mrs. Lorimer?”

George braced himself in the dark and said quietly:

"No; what?"

"She went to give a lesson to Milly Matthews, and she was blind."

"Blind!" echoed George, halting in the road.

"Drunk, you ass," said Walter composedly.

"I don't believe it," said George fiercely.

"It was a shock to me," said Walter. "I rather liked her, and thought that the women might have stretched a point to make her more comfortable here. But it's no good now. She can't be let into the church again — not to play. People wouldn't stand it. Fleetwood suspected her some time ago, and spoke to Mostyn about it, but they agreed that so long as she behaved decently it wasn't fair to do or even say anything."

George's first impulse had been to tell Walter that he was talking about the woman he loved, but he saw now that anything he said could only harm her. Accepting his silence as natural, since he had frankly expressed an interest in Mrs. Lorimer, Walter went on, compassionately:

"Of course it's an old story. Mostyn went down to see Lorimer, and the poor little rat told him all about it. She keeps quiet, and then she

breaks out. They've shifted about from place to place — to make a fresh start. Where they were last a young swine of a farmer used to take her whisky."

"For God's sake shut up," said George in desperation.

"Sorry, old chap," said Walter penitently. "I forgot you were a pal of hers. I'm sure Lorimer must be grateful to you for being friendly and taking her out of herself. Perhaps if more people had done the same she might have kept straight. But one never knows, in cases like that. Mostyn wants to get her into a home."

How much or how little her vices were mingled George could not know. But he knew that he had lent his manhood to shame. A dozen little peculiarities in her behavior were now explained: what was beyond her perfume stank in his nostrils. Rightly or wrongly, he saw himself the dupe of the bottle. In spite of his degradation he was loyal to what he could not now pretend to be love, and the next day he extended his luncheon hour to hurry out to the cottage, risking the chance of Mr. Lorimer's being at home. He was not at home, but she refused to see George, sending a message by the little maid that she was unwell. Then he

wrote, saying that he must see her. She did not answer, and he went to the cottage again. This time the maid gave him a note, evidently kept in readiness. "Why do you persecute me? For pity's sake leave me alone. I hope I have not harmed you, and I am sure nobody suspects." Apparently as an afterthought she added: "I shall never regret."

Nor, when the first misery was over, did he; and always in his thoughts of her, shame was mingled with a feeling of gratitude that he could neither explain nor justify. But for the time he suffered the full punishment of his guilt. As is usual in such cases, there were now plenty of people besides Doctor Fleetwood who had suspected Mrs. Lorimer's habit, and possibly to explain their having neglected her, they spoke of what they had noticed. George's interest in her had been open enough to make him a natural recipient of these confidences; and he was exposed to the humiliation of being treated as a chivalrous and quixotic, though rather an unsuspecting person. His bitterest moment of all was on the day when the contents of the Lorimer's cottage were sold. Mr. Lorimer had been transferred by his company to a new district. His

wife had already gone, but he remained to settle up affairs. George met him carrying some books that had been reserved from the sale. Lorimer did not speak, but the sight of him, so broken and yet so patiently prepared to make a fresh start, was almost more than George could bear. Only common-sense kept him from going up to the man and confessing that he had wronged him.

The natural result of George's remorse was a reaction to the point of view expressed by Mr. Mostyn. He now had an exaggerated respect for healthy Philistinism. In his arrogance he had misjudged these noisy people who played games and mocked at temperament. His dreams had only led him astray. He distrusted all his instincts: his love of nature, his critical speculations about a world that was, after all, a world of clean straight fellows, who got things done to the best of their powers. The Grove was now the place of Rahab's window; even his religious emotions were tainted with the associations of sin. Fortunately this mood did not last long; what helped to weaken it was the reflection that even Mr. Mostyn seemed to have a sentimental tolerance for the irregular alliances of clean, straight young Englishmen — with a subject

race. He did not approve in so many words, but his quotations from his favorite poet indicated that he thought them rather finer fellows for their human weakness, and that the fair heathen were honored by their attentions. Then George went with Walter and Amelia and their beloved to a musical play at the Barstow Theater, which dealt with the complications of a naval officer between a dusky daughter of the East and a sweet English girl. His companions wept in sympathy, but George was infuriated. The picture of the Servian woman still worked in his imagination.

Out of it all emerged with triumphant though now forbidding clearness the image of Mary Festing. That kept him from becoming cynical. Mary, and Mary only, was the measure of his guilt. Before, she had been set apart from passion; now she was sacred from his love. He could never touch her cool hand again without the sense of profanity; never meet her grave eyes with even the courage of dissimulation. Sometimes he dreamed that she knew; she floated moon-like over the fir-trees, with hands idle in her lap and tears falling silently from her bowed face, while his mother cried under the earth, and a scarlet window burned in the recesses of the Grove. It was only

when he thought of Mary and his mother that he came near to hating the woman with whom he had stained the womanhood he loved.

There were Darragh's letters with news of Mary to remind him that it was not his instincts and emotions, but his character that had betrayed him. Darragh and Mary lived innocent in a world where such instincts and emotions were allowed full play, were the stuff of their trade. They had for companions men and women who flouted or evaded the conventions by which those instincts and emotions were controlled; but, without shrinking, and often with sympathy for the particular case, they kept their heads. Mary's novel dealt with an irregular passion, and Darragh's letters were enough to show that no speculation was feared between them. It did not occur to George that some excuse might be found for him in the fact that he had not, like Mary and Darragh, a trade in which the whole of him could be expressed, as also in the fact of exile from anything like intelligent female society. With Mrs. Glanville's house open to him he would not have consorted with village organists.

When George was five and twenty his father died, and so his last companion was gone. Mr. Tracy had been ailing for some time, but the end came

with a suddenness that seemed appropriate. A chill made acute the malady that had been chronic, and the strong man drove home to his bed. From the first he knew that he was going to die, and knew it with a startled indignation that reminded George of a noble animal shot from behind. Pain made him alert and he sat up in bed, with the line deepening into a cleft between his brows, while he harassed the household with precise directions about his affairs. When Doctor Fleetwood told him to lie down, and murmured hopes of recovery, Mr. Tracy called him an old fool.

One thing that bothered him was the disposition of Bourneside. He knew that George loved the place and Walter did not, but his passionate belief in the wisdom of his country's laws and traditions would not allow him to will it away from his elder son. Walter would gladly have received an equivalent in the division of his father's interest in the bank, but he dared not say so. A dozen times a day Mr. Tracy called the two young men to his room and, with an eye upon George for witness, impressed upon Walter his duties to the estate. On the third day of his illness George and Walter were at supper, leaving Amelia with the nurse, when there came a hammering on the floor above. They

hurried to the sick-room. Still clutching the stick with which he had hammered on the floor, Mr. Tracy was able to say, "Don't sell a yard of it!" before he sank into the coma from which he did not wake.

It was during the period of depression following his father's death that George met Mary Festing again. Though now nominally a partner in the bank he was not yet, nor did he wish to be, admitted to the full responsibilities of directorship. He did his work automatically, with a growing distaste, and was glad of any opportunity to fulfill commissions outside routine. Some development of the London business needed the report of an interested person, and George was asked to see to it. For some reason or other he wrote to Eleanor Markham, telling her that he would be in London, and she asked him to spend the week-end at Holmhurst.

On the Saturday afternoon he was just about to take his ticket at Victoria when he became aware that Mary Festing was standing beside him. The sight of her, so cool and serene in blue linen with a white scarf about her shoulders, affected him strangely. He had not been thinking about her, he had not told either Darragh or Mrs. Glanville

that he was coming to London, and yet he was not surprised to see her. She was a figure of consolation, embodying the hours of peace at Holmhurst that he had been hoping to enjoy. When he shook hands with her she said quietly: "Eleanor told me that you were going down by this train." At the time it seemed a perfectly natural explanation of her presence; it was only afterward that he reflected that she must have chosen to be there.

When they had seated themselves in the train, on opposite seats, he became aware of a change in her manner to him, or rather in the relations between them. She was curiously humble, as if it were now she and not he who was to be taken for granted. The current of curiosity which, in spite of her lurking passiveness of attitude, he had always felt proceeding from her, had ceased. He no longer felt the need to bluff, but the effect, instead of being a relief, was disturbing. Resistance removed, he did not know what to put in its place, and it was as if she were waiting.

At first he tried to explain her manner by her sense of his double loss since he had last seen her. She did not wish to spy upon his grief. Since she did not ask him any questions and silence was awkward, he was driven to ask her questions about

Darragh and her work. She answered rather coldly, so that he wondered if she and Darragh had quarreled. There was nothing in her actual remarks to indicate that they had, and she had seen Darragh — who was now living in Chelsea — only that morning. But she spoke as if neither Darragh nor her work was the immediate purpose.

George was perplexed. It was as if he had left something undone. About his own feelings he had no perplexity. Quietly, despairingly, he knew that he loved her, that he had always loved her. Having known woman, although basely, he could no longer mistake the nature of his feelings with regard to her. The poor creature with whom he had abused the name of love had at least done that for him. He knew now that his white thoughts of Mary and the stirring of his blood in her presence were parts of the same mystery. He understood that what had made him bluff with her had been the uncertainty whether she was ready to accept all that was implied in his love, in any man's love. How much of his belief that she was not ready was due to his conversation with Doctor Raymond on the evening when they crossed the Gardens together, he could not have said; but he knew that, in spite of it, if he could have come clean to her he would

have knelt and offered her the devotion of his heart. But that was now impossible.

Unable to say what was in his heart, he talked to her freely about what was in his head: his future plans or no plans, the news of Bourneside, the mild humors of Walter's and Amelia's courtships. He half hoped that something of what he could not say would come out in his comments. Mary in her corner, leaning her dark head on her hand, listened with apparent interest, but her glance at him was not critical as formerly, and when she met his eyes her own looked defensive. It was almost as if she and not he had something to conceal.

Whether for this reason, or because she had some difficulty in hearing him, at one point in the journey she got up suddenly and came and sat beside him. The movement, so swift and decided, in the quivering train recalled the sudden movement of that other woman in the quaking room, with all the width of innocence between the two, and he could have cried out irritably: "You shouldn't have done that!" He found himself stammering, and the next moment the train shot out from a dark cutting into a miracle of light and color. On either side the embankment was alive with Campanulas, white, rose and blue, wind-shaken and sun-suffused.

At the lovely unexpected sight they both exclaimed: "Look!" It was only with an effort that he had not seized her hand. If he had, he knew that the touch of her in that moment of emotion shared would have abolished the sense of his unfitness and of her austerity. He would have turned and taken her in his arms and said: "Mary, I love you. I have always loved you."

The moment of danger past, he steeled himself against it by talking in a way that he knew to be trite and informing about the probable reason for the flowers. There were nurseries in the neighborhood; somebody must have flung a handful of seed upon the embankment, and in succeeding years the flowers had spread; and so on, and so on. Whether or not his nervousness reacted upon Mary, she was ill at ease, though strangely quiet, and he was glad when they changed at Sutton. For the remaining short stage of the journey Mary seemed to make a point of looking for a compartment in which there were other people.

That week-end at Holmhurst was destined for George to be full of half-meanings and little perplexities. In a minority of one — for Mr. Markham was now but a scholarly child with a thin humor that was frankly indulged — he felt male

and clumsy, and both women were quietly gay, though their embrace at meeting made him think of Ruth and Naomi. Eleanor had come to the stage, not uncommon in the religious, in which the business of the world is a series of amusing phenomena; and once in her company Mary seemed to recover her spirits, with perhaps a new note of irony. The place itself was right for their mood; a deep-roofed Surrey farmhouse, converted to a vicarage, standing in an irregular garden with grassed alleys and shady bowers. The cedared lawn was bounded by a sunk fence giving an uninterrupted view over suave, park-like country to blue distant hills. Always to George the landscape suggested the word "Beulah," though in his present company he felt that the immediate surroundings might have been the scene of a court of love. Mr. Markham, with his frail ascetic face, and rather tiresome disquisitions, might have been the presiding cardinal. He ought to have snuffed.

They lay about in deck chairs among roses in the long June evening and talked lazily. They did not talk about love, but George could feel a feminine flicker, like summer lightning, of amusement about the humors of man. With the consciousness of sleeping thunder in his blood, he thought that

they didn't play fairly; they trifled with problems they didn't understand. It was all very well for them — a nun by choice and a nun by temperament. Though, sometimes, he had the odd idea that if the grossness which poisoned his memory had been revealed, it would have been laughed out of court rather than condemned with horror.

Mary now talked a great deal about Darragh, with respect of his work and amusement of his "ways." It was evident that she played a sisterly part in his life. She herself had long outgrown the callow taste for picturesque starvation, and Darragh, apparently, had never had it, but he was incredibly careless. He had to be dug out to meals, bullied into clothes, and dry-nursed in bargains. In the autumn Mary, Darragh and his mother were going to Italy.

That took them back to the holidays in Cornwall. Mrs. Darragh still had the cottage, though she now spent a great deal of her time in London. She often spoke of George. With her as a text, and so leaving him uncertain whether the interest was personal or vicarious, Mary asked him did he still make maps, and was Lancelot still his hero?

Then Eleanor had to hear the tale, and so became reminiscent of his childhood. "You were a funny

boy," she said. Mary had to be given instances, and, in the dark, George was able to explain and justify the motives which had made him act so queerly. The soft laughter, so understanding and maternal in its cadences, made him feel vaguely that he had lost something in growing up. In this atmosphere, and with the abiding sense of all mysteries explained, though by the wrong sibyl, he would not have minded if Mary had referred to the scene in the nursery. Somehow it did not seem to matter now. But she did not. Perhaps she had forgotten, or perhaps she thought that it would recall too vividly his mother.

In the carrying in of chairs, putting out of lights and locking up, Mary slipped away to bed without saying good night to him. The sense of her under the same roof was a mingled emotion. In the night he dreamed that Mrs. Lorimer was dead, and that Mary covered her with pitiful white roses. He was awakened by thunder and pouring rain, and rising to close the casement, recognized that what had inspired his dream was a great bush of white roses in the center of the curving drive.

In the morning he thought that Mary looked hollow-cheeked and heavy-eyed, though she was extravagantly brisk and businesslike in her manner.

The thunder, she said, had cleared the air; "though," she added, "it seems to have ruined the roses." That was when they were leaving the front door on their way to early celebration in the queer little church with a shingled spire. George knew that Mary's attendance was only to please Eleanor, and that Eleanor knew it; and yet, kneeling at her side, he felt that there was a conception of the rite in which Mary's polite acquiescence was enough, and that Eleanor had it. But then the spiritual reach of Eleanor seemed to include everything, and he thought of the sheet let down from Heaven.

After breakfast Mary asked him to come out for a walk. Whatever had been the cause of her curious abstraction in the train she was now completely mistress of herself. He concluded that, meeting him after an interval in which he had lost both his mother and father, she had expected to find him sentimental, and was prepared to be sympathetic. Perhaps she had even been a little hurt that her sympathy wasn't needed. Now she was evidently relieved that it wasn't. She was no sentimentalist and, as she said, the thunder had cleared the air. There was no trace of irony in her manner now. She was the best of companions out-of-

doors; loping along with a smooth stride, quick to notice, but with a light hand upon scenery, keen to catch a meaning, but not over-anxious to thrash it out, and, best of all, easy to be silent with.

As they walked in the washed air over swelling country that, to George's western eyes, had a curious urbanity from the absence of rocks and undergrowth, along unfenced roads, and by bridle-paths through orderly, hyacinth-paved woods, she showed an active interest in his affairs. Did he mean to stop in Barstow, and would his more responsible position give him opportunities for working out any of the ideas he had hinted at in his letters to Darragh? Conscious that the ideas hinted at were very vague, he felt rather ashamed at her remembering them, but her interest was bracing. He felt as if he had made a new pact with her upon a sounder though less personal basis than before. Somehow they had reached an understanding without his "having it out" with her, and if there was something unexplained, there was enough in common between them for comfortable terms. When they parted that night she gave him friendly eyes with her hand, and he felt that she, too, had found an adjustment that satisfied her. He was glad that she found or made it inconvenient to travel by the same train

with him back to London in the morning. Disturbing and perplexing though it had been, there was an experience that he did not wish diluted. To the end of his life he would cherish the memory of her swift movement in the train.

CHAPTER XVI

FOR some time the affairs of the bank had been in a state of uncertainty. They were not unprosperous, but they had reached a point at which a definite choice of future policy had to be taken. It was a question of admitting new shareholders or amalgamating with a larger concern. There were meetings of directors, in which George took only a languid interest. He felt that neither alternative pleased him, but when he came to ask himself why, he found that the reason was nothing more than an instinctive dislike to corporations. Personal enterprise was one thing, and public organization another, but he distrusted any separation of investing from executive interests for the purpose of private gain.

When Walter finally told him that the balance of opinion was in favor of absorption into the Western Counties Bank, George knew that he had come to a crisis in his life.

“Supposing I stand out?” he said.

“Of course you can if you like,” said Walter

rather sorely, "but unless you have some very strong reason I don't think you ought to raise objections at this stage. It is a natural development of business, and from what we can make out it is bound to be to our advantage. Why do you wish to complicate matters?"

"My notion was to simplify them by standing out altogether," said George.

"Why, have you heard of anything?" said Walter quickly.

George laughed at his eagerness and said:

"No, but I should like to look round me for a bit."

Walter shook his head. "You won't find a better opportunity than this," he said.

"No, but I might make one," said George, who was beginning to enjoy Walter's mystification, though his own purpose was by no means clear, and certainly not with the idea of immediate profit. He had become possessed of an overwhelming desire for a free hand. Walter evidently thought him unwise, but agreed to find out what his interest in the bank was worth in the terms of the proposed amalgamation.

The offer was not large, but George decided to take it. His first idea was to realize all his re-

sources. That raised another question. Walter, who was to be married at Christmas, had been talking vaguely about trying to let Bourneside. He wanted to live in Cleeve. There was nothing in the terms of Mr. Tracy's will to forbid this, so long as the property was not neglected, but George could not bear to think of Bourneside in the hands of strangers. He asked Walter if he would make Bourneside a part of the readjustment of interests, and Walter jumped at the opportunity. His only concern was for George.

"Of course, if you are thinking of turning gentleman-farmer, I dare say you could grub along," he said. "It seems rather a feeble thing to do at your age, but you've enough capital to stand your losses until you can catch on to a good thing."

George let the idea of a gentleman-farmer remain as the ostensible reason for his apparent foolishness. Since his father's death he had managed Bourneside, and had begun to see possibilities that were worth developing. He did not mean to rely on them for his entire income, but they would serve as a pretext, and he did not wish to scandalize Walter by telling him that the "good thing" was presenting itself to his imagination more and more clearly in the form of a shop.

All his observations, conscious or unconscious, in London and Barstow, seemed to bring out the fact that the shop — in a wide sense of the word — was the weakest point in the commercial organization. It was the purveyor — from the grocer to the theatrical manager — who was the duffer. The public was all right, and if the manufacturer was not, his subordinates were. "The men are splendid," might be said with truth of almost any department of industry. More and more he was learning to admire the men who did the work. But between them and the public was the middleman. So far from being unnecessary, the middleman was getting more and more important as the social organization grew more complicated. People hadn't time or wouldn't take the trouble to look for what they wanted; they took what they could get. Everything depended upon the middleman, and at present he represented the lowest level of intelligence in the community. He was a barrier between healthy supply and demand; because of him the best work could not find a market. There were the big stores, of course, but they were out for dividends, not shopkeeping, and they flourished on people's laziness rather than their judgment; and all the experiments in what might be called the higher

shopkeeping seemed to be made by sentimental amateurs. They relied, so to speak, on their beautiful eyes.

The more George thought about it, the more convinced he was that his game was to be some sort of purveyor — an interpreter between the producer and the consumer. But the matter needed a great deal of consideration; it was important to begin by purveying the right thing. On the whole he was inclined to believe that he ought to begin with something ornamental, or, at any rate, more or less in the nature of a luxury. For some reason or other — and it was connected in his mind with the practical value of the esthetic instinct — people were far more discriminating about their luxuries than they were about their necessities. He must begin at the top. At the same time he must begin with something in general demand and something, moreover, that did not need special training in the purveyor. A newspaper or a theater — the commonest attractions to the amateur — was ruled out from the beginning.

During the autumn George devoted all his energies to the improvement of Bourneside. The public was not to be caught, any more than England was to be saved, with cabbages, but he knew that,

whatever he did, Bourneside would come into it by and by. Since he had given his personal attention to the estate he had been more than ever impressed by the knowledge and skill with which his father had managed it. His main idea had been the preciousness of the soil, so that his cultivation, though not technically so, had been intensive. Toward the end of his life he had specialized in market gardening. The two nearer fields had been kept for the purposes of a small dairy farm, but Gardiner's field had been plowed and enriched and turned over to small fruit and vegetables.

The place was now in the best condition for scientific experiments. Intensive culture was very much in the air, and George was considering the advisability of getting over a man from France when there fell into his hands Abercrombie's *Everyman His Own Gardener*, which Oliver Goldsmith declined to revise on the grounds that "the style was best suited to the subject of which it treated" and that it required "nothing at his hands." Abercrombie sent him to McPhail, Nicol and Knight, and to the still earlier work of London and Wise, *The Retir'd Gardn'r*, published in 1706.

In these books George found the methods of the "new gardening" described in detail, and it seemed

reasonable to suppose that a system pursued nearly two hundred years ago with regard to the peculiarities of English climate and soil would be the best for his purpose. He decided to do without the Frenchman.

He found an enthusiastic supporter in Andrews, the young man who had succeeded Dicky Dando. As they worked among their frames and cloches — red and blue bell glasses being the last proof of George's insanity to Walter and Amelia — Andrews was never tired of talking about Mr. Tracy and regretting that he had not lived to share the discovery of "them old books". From what George could make out, it was only a sturdy British prejudice that had kept his father from adopting the French methods. He had talked to Andrews about them. George liked to think that he was taking up the work where his father left it off, and to remember that, at the end, they had been associated in *The Yeoman's Year Book*. Paying for its publication had been his first pious duty, and it presently brought him interesting correspondence. Apart from the filial duty, George soon found that he was taking a keen pleasure in the work for its own sake.

He had a good deal of his father's passion for

the soil, and once awakened by practise it seemed to coordinate his more occult feelings about nature. As he sauntered home earthy from Gardiner's field in the evening, it amused him to think that the Waterfall nodded approvingly. Undoubtedly he belonged to the Bourne. Meanwhile he kept his eyes open for an opportunity to find expression for his more public interests. He had decided that he must find it in Barstow. London was too solid—at any rate, for a beginning. Somehow his father's ideas about him were coming true, after all. He had found a base; now he must get into the skirmishing line.

The opportunity presented itself quite suddenly in the shape of a corner shop for sale at the top of the hill by which one climbed out of Barstow into Cleeve. The position could hardly be bettered; it was both central and commanding. The shop belonged to a draper named Foy whose declining affairs, as they filtered through the bank, had for a long time excited George's mingled sympathy and impatience.

Unwilling to disturb Walter before he was ready to begin, George arranged with Foy to take over the premises from the end of the year. The transaction would make a big hole in his capital, but

the risk had to be taken, and if the experiment failed, he would have little difficulty in finding a tenant for the shop. There was a sporting attraction in starting where another man had come to grief.

The obvious thing was to begin by selling the produce of Bourneside. There would be no lack of supplies, for George's short experience as a market gardener told him that no kind of producer suffered more from the greed and stupidity of the middleman. George knew a dozen farmers who would welcome a wholesale buyer content with reasonable profits. But for various reasons he decided that it would be inadvisable to start as a greengrocer. It was necessary to make a little splash.

Directly after Walter's wedding George went up to London and called on Mrs. Glanville. When she had done crying out at the improvement in his appearance, the tan of him, the breadth of his shoulders, and his knowing look of being up to something, he said:

"What's the most important thing in the world?"

"Frocks," she said emphatically, "and thereby hangs a tale. Kate Flanders is on her beam ends."

"Then we'll right her," he said, and proceeded to tell Mrs. Glanville what he was up to. She was

attracted by the general idea, but was doubtful about Kate Flanders.

"You'll never get her away from London," she said, "but I'll speak to her if you like."

"No, you don't," he said. "But if I may tell Miss Flanders that you'll come to Barstow for your frocks—?"

"Ah, you'll succeed as a shopkeeper," said Mrs. Glanville quietly.

When he went to Hanover Square he observed that Kate Flanders made hats as well as frocks. There was a single hat on a tall stem in the window; black with an eye of green. "It's like a sin," he said to himself with a chuckle, as he opened the door.

Kate received him gloomily, surrounded by accounts, in an upper room. Evidently his name had conveyed nothing to her, though she remembered his face directly she saw him and gave him a cold bow. She made no sign of wondering why he had come, but eyed him with the same hostile expression she might have worn to the dunning creditor he surmised to have been in her mind when his name was announced. Meeting her again, he felt that he liked Kate extraordinarily; her back-to-the-wall attitude gave him confidence and geniality—

as if he were dealing with a badly-used creature, and had to prove from the beginning that all men were not liars. It would be amusing to humanize her. When he spoke of Mrs. Glanville, she said at once:

“Why don't you tell her she wears her stays too short? I've done my best.”

He cheerfully said that he would, and then came straight to his business with:

“I'm opening a shop in Barstow, and I want a dressmaker. I stand the racket; you run the show.”

For a long time she would not listen to him. The salary he offered was all right, but what scope would she have in Barstow?

“You'll have less to uneducate,” he said.

“That's true,” she admitted, with a gleam of appreciation in her eyes that reminded him of a vicious mare's. “Still,” she went on, “Barstow is a small place.”

“There's the whole West of England,” he said.

“They come to London,” said Kate.

“Not when we've started,” he assured her.

She eyed him suspiciously, and said:

“May I ask what you are doing it for, Mr. Tracy?”

“For fun,” he said frankly.

That impressed her, and he followed up his advantage.

"Look here, Miss Flanders," he said, jumping up from his chair, "I want you to help me. I believe there's a very big opportunity for anybody who is prepared to treat business as a game and take the profits for granted. My notion is a team of specialists, like yourself, each with an absolutely free hand as long as they are loyal to the concern. I provide the premises, pay the salaries, take all the risks and find all the materials. If the thing succeeds we can arrange a system of profit-sharing; if it fails—I have had my fun. As you see, I'm not doing anything startlingly new; it simply means that I am beginning shopkeeping at the other end."

Like Mrs. Glanville, she was attracted by the general idea, though she doubted the prospects for her own department. Finally she agreed to come to him for a year, if she might bring her own assistants, for whom she seemed to have a savage affection.

When George left Hanover Square he was astonished at the rapidity with which his ideas were taking shape. One thing suggested another. Obviously the next thing to frocks was a place to wear

them in. He must have a department of house furnishing and decoration. That suggested and explained the connection there had always been in his mind between Kate Flanders and Mr. Lindrop.

When he called to see Lindrop he was more than ever impressed by the fact that the artist was being wasted. His genius was for handling and arranging beautiful things; not for painting pictures of them. If you got to the bottom of it, the real meaning of his art to him was that it brought him the attention of pretty women. It was an extended sexual attraction. Looking at his Dantesque head, with its liquid apprehensive eyes, while Lindrop talked about the incomprehensible success of mere craftsmanship, George thought with grim amusement that his profile alone was worth the salary. He would be the rage of feminine Cleeve. But Lindrop needed careful management. Being an unconscious humbug he was naturally bothered by delicate scruples about the dignity of his art. He was full of ideas about house decoration, but he could not get over the difference between the studio and the shop. George saw that he had better leave him to Mrs. Glanville. She asked Lindrop to dinner and in a rose-tinted twilight talked to him about William Morris and woman's craving for beauty

in the home; and he agreed at any rate to advise upon the decoration of Tracy's.

The first practical step taken, George found that the difficulty was to know where to stop. Everybody he spoke to had some new suggestion to offer based upon the shortcomings of the average shop-keeper. There was every evidence that whether Tracy's succeeded or failed the experiment was worth trying. But it was necessary to examine the suggestions; to distinguish between the genuine grievance and mere grumbling and stupidity. Although George's aim was finally the department store, he saw that it would be a mistake to start with too many departments at once. Intensive rather than extensive culture was the safest policy. Recognizing that women were the best guides, men being too much concerned about the financial question, which he was deliberately deferring, he held consultations with Mrs. Glanville, Mrs. Raymond, Mrs. Dove and Kate Flanders. Their opinions gave him a pretty wide field to go upon, and as a result, he decided to begin with dressmaking and millinery, house decoration, a book-shop and circulating library, and a tea-room. There was not a book-shop worth the name in Barstow or Cleeve; hardly, when he came to think of it, in London.

There were institutions for the automatic sale and circulation of classics and half a dozen of the more popular novelists, but there was no attempt to deal intelligently with the great and increasing mass of modern literature. On the one hand good books were being written and printed—hardly published—and on the other people were crying out for good books to read. Grateful memory of the only bookseller's assistant in London who seemed to know the names of more than Shakespeare, Tennyson, Longfellow and six living novelists, enabled George to find the man he wanted without delay. The tea-room was an obvious attraction, and a good manageress could easily be found in Barstow.

George had the whole scheme, as he said, cut and dried before he spoke to Darragh about it. He hardly knew why he delayed doing so, except that Darragh had a way of throwing cold water on things by silence. Darragh, who was now beginning to make a reputation, though he did not sell many pictures, was sympathetic with a reservation. His fear was not that George would fail, but that he would succeed.

“You'll get swallowed up in Tracy's,” he said.

"It's my game," said George, "my picture, my poem."

"Yes," said Darragh quietly, "but one doesn't paint a picture or write a poem for the sake of the signature."

"It goes a long way in the market," said George.

"There's price," said Darragh, as he squeezed a worm of paint on his palette, "and there's value."

George felt that he must make some allowance for a man who suffered from the difference between the two, and he said:

"The value is to me; it amuses me enormously. And I don't think the thing will be entirely without value from a general point of view."

"I'm sure it won't," said Darragh, "something of the sort is badly wanted. It's you I'm thinking about."

George could not quite understand Darragh's point of view. Clearly it was not the shop idea that repelled him, for he entirely and amusedly approved of the enlistment of Lindrop. He predicted that Lindrop's department would run away from all the others. He could tell George of any number of good craftsmen in every branch of

decorative art, from furniture to jewelry, who could not find a proper market for their work. There never was a time when so much good stuff was being produced, and there never was a time when the general standard of taste was so high. But it could only be indulged by happy accident. The producers couldn't afford to advertise, and people didn't come poking round the studios and workshops.

"So that the real arbiter of taste," said Darragh, "is the buyer for the big shops which can and do advertise."

All this was so encouraging to George that he did not worry about Darragh's vague dissatisfaction at the idea of Tracy's. After all, one must allow something for the peculiarities of the artistic mind. George would have liked to compare notes with Mary Festing, but she was away with Mrs. Darragh in Cornwall.

While Tracy's was being got ready, George had Kate Flanders and Lindrop down to stop with him at Bourneside. It was very important that they should get on well together. Amelia accepted the situation in a *nil admirari* spirit. She had always known that George was mad, and Mr. Lindrop was a duck. She hoped that George

would not go to smash before she was married, because she wanted Mr. Lindrop to do her drawing-room. It was a good thing that Harry was in India; men were so down on anybody with a spark of imagination. The attitude of Kate Flanders, whom Amelia christened "Mrs. Siddons," to Lindrop, was a source of great amusement to George. In the presence of a good-looking woman Lindrop simply could not help languishing, and Kate had too keen a sense of his professional value to resent his attentions. "He's a sickly fool, but he knows," was her comment.

By the time Walter returned from his honeymoon in Switzerland the name Tracy was already up over the shop at the top of Barton Hill. As George had expected, the name stuck in Walter's throat, but the good-humored chaff to which he was subjected at the club kept him from taking the matter too seriously. The businesslike way in which George had set to work had impressed people; and the division of opinion as to his chances of success helped to soften the blow for his brother. It enabled him to express concern on purely practical grounds.

Tracy's opened quietly in April—not on the first, as Amelia professed to desire. George al-

ready saw that the uncertain quantity in his "team" was going to make the running — at any rate for spectacular purposes. Before the fitting up of Tracy's was completed Lindrop had received commissions to carry out "interiors" in country houses. This was satisfactory, for several reasons: it kept Lindrop occupied, the transactions were very profitable in proportion to the cost of labor and materials, and they did not arouse the jealousy of local tradesmen. Such commissions had formerly been executed from London, and the capacity to undertake them was a credit to the town. George did not mean to stop there; he would have to come into competition all down the scale; but he wished to hurt the susceptibilities of his neighbors as little as possible at the beginning.

The merits of Kate Flanders, who, with her two assistants, lived on the premises, were not so immediately recognized. Her models in the window provoked discussion, which automatically benefited the tea-room, but orders were slow in coming in. George observed that in matters of dress women are absolutely dependent on a lead. Presently the duchess came to Kate for an evening gown, and after that Kate's hands were full. The duchess, who was a lively young woman of part American

birth, expressed a friendly interest in Tracy's. She remembered old Mr. Tracy in connection with agricultural shows, and talked to George about intensive culture. Altogether George had no reason to be dissatisfied with his beginning. Something must be allowed for curiosity, but he had other cards to play before it should be exhausted, and the book-shop, at any rate, sank into grateful acceptance with the quiet security of a long-felt want.

CHAPTER XVII

IN less than three years Tracy's commanded the West of England. George was not really astonished at his own success. He had done nothing remarkable. As he told Kate Flanders, he had merely begun shopkeeping at the other end — the right end. In the transition from the commercial to the financial epoch the practise of shopkeeping had ceased to correspond with the theory. He had retranslated the theory into the terms of practise demanded by the new conditions. He had in practise, instead of only in theory, given the public what the public wanted.

The process had been absorbingly interesting. It had used the whole of him. Instead of being a mere matter of intelligent observation it had involved the deepest researches into the psychology of his period; researches in which intuition was a far better guide than reason. There was not a queer fancy of his childhood that he could afford to ignore. A smile or a stammer had often told him more than the most elaborate explanations

on the part of a customer. The irrational fancy was the thing that really mattered. By the time the need was reasoned out it was already being clumsily supplied by his rivals. Facts were always too late. They were the tombstones of desire. In anticipating a demand, a novel or a play or a poem was more to his purpose than a Blue Book report or an article in a financial journal — though in the case of the play it was necessary to get at it before it had been sterilized by the actor-manager. "Is it accepted of song?" was flat commercial wisdom from books to bacon. What the public thought it wanted was often merely the leavings of old financial tyranny. His profitable aim was what the public wanted in its bones at two o'clock in the morning; and speaking generally, what the public wanted in its bones was the very best of its kind that could be got at a reasonable price. One of the first axioms he printed for the benefit of his staff was: "Your best customer is the subconscious mind."

All along he found that instead of straining after new business he had to put the brake on. Possibilities accumulated against him; it was a matter of lifting sluices at the right moment. At an early date sheer pressure compelled him to open a green-

grocery department or, as he said, "let in the Bourne"; fruit, flowers and vegetables were followed by butter, cheese and bacon, and now Tracy's was the depot for a district.

As at the beginning, however, the house furnishing and decoration department kept the lead. It was here that the choice of material became embarrassing. On the one side were eager craftsmen, long denied recognition; on the other householders of every class, whose natural tastes had been bullied or starved into acceptance of shoddy, making delighted discoveries with: "*That's* what I want!" When Lindrop was offered a subordinate to take what George called the "crude furnishing" off his hands, he said humorously: "Oh, but I say, you know, that's the crux of the whole thing. You can trust a bally shop-girl to buy casement cloth or wall-paper; it takes me to choose a kitchen table." Down in Somerset George discovered a small cabinet-maker who was turning out beautiful furniture on Sheraton lines for little more than the cost of the honest wood; George doubled his prices and gave him a contract for all he could make, and a workshop into the bargain, and found the transaction profitable. Then, in South Wales, there was a potter, a retired soldier who was re-

producing Chinese glazes, flambé, sang-de-boeuf and peachblow, for his own amusement. He introduced himself. He'd be awful glad, you know, if Tracy's would give the stuff a chance. The Bond Street people didn't seem to think there was anything in it, and they rushed you so if they sold it on commission.

In every department George worked from the top downward. People can't afford to pay that price? Well, then, we must find something simpler — not a cheap imitation of the same thing. He was as keen to get at the true inwardness of the factory girl's request for "something tasty" as to satisfy the colonel's demand for "the sort of anchovy paste that we used to get when I was a boy, sir!" It was Kate Flanders who created a mode at fifteen shillings that became historical in servants' "black."

George was not in it for philanthropy; what he called his fun absolutely depended on making the business pay; but he soon saw that Tracy's was going to be beneficial to the neighborhood. It was not only that it supported the better sort of producer, agriculturalist, manufacturer and craftsman, but it reacted upon the other shops in the town. They grumbled at the competition, but

were driven to consider their ways in the effort to meet it. And since in several directions the competition touched London rather than Barstow, there were two sides even to that. It encouraged the local habit in shopping, and Tracy's was not always handy.

From the first George recognized that everything depended upon the staff. He was the impresario rather than the master, firm but sympathetic. The tea-room had quickly become a small restaurant and ascended to the top floor with a mess-room for the staff, and George generally lunched with the members at liberty at his hour. In contact with simpler clients Kate Flanders had become more human, and softened the desperate efficiency of her style in its man-killing aim without losing its originality. Lindrop had his moods, and there was always the fear that he would get married by a wealthy widow, but he had clearly found his game. In choosing subordinates George went for essentials. "Smartness" was no use to him; he wanted imagination. He was not surprised to find that previous experience was no proof of suitability. Had he not read in the speech of a great captain of industry to commercial travelers: "Your business is to persuade people to buy some-

thing they don't want." He found his men in all sorts of unexpected places. Thus, the manager of the drug department was a young Irish dramatist he had met in Darragh's studio. When somebody said something to George about the romance of shopkeeping, he laughed and furtively tied a knot in his handkerchief. Afterward he went into his office and wrote in his book of maxims: "The romance of shopkeeping is in the cold facts."

Unfortunately Tracy's was his game, his picture, his poem. Between it and Bourneside he was realizing himself in every fiber. Or almost. Sometimes when he was tired he was dimly conscious of a part of himself that walked lonely in a far place of unanswered questions. In his dreams the place became the Grove. It was full of cherished and banished memories all jumbled up together; the shadow of his mother's face on the wall, the picture of the Servian woman, the broken iris, Mary's passion of tears in the nursery and her swift homing to him in the train. Sometimes when Mary moved across his dream the fir-trees lifted and sighed and he said indignantly, "I don't, I don't," as he had denied the accusation of writing "po'try". Oddly enough, Rahab's window had faded from his dreams. Once he found himself

looking for it and its place was taken by the window of the Resurrection.

Waking, he tried to straighten things out. It was unreasonable that Mary Festing should haunt him in this way. He doubted, now, even if he loved her. She was too cool and remote. And anyhow, she had said that love in its completeness was "horrid". If it had been Mrs. Lorimer who haunted his dreams he could have understood it. In his waking thoughts he admitted that she was a subject for remorse. He took the trouble to find out what had become of her, and was glad to hear that she seemed to have reformed. But, whatever the moralists might say, the skeleton at his feast of life was never Mrs. Lorimer but always Mary Festing. He still owed her one — but now in another meaning. She had some sort of claim upon him. What it was he did not know, though sometimes he had the idea that Darraghi and Mary were talking about it in Chelsea.

Amelia was now married, and Andrews and his wife lived in the house and looked after George. He had turned the old nursery at the top of the house into a sort of study. It was there that he often had the sense of a part of himself walking lonely in a far place. He put it down to physical

reasons. The place got no sun. Indeed, the whole front of the house was rather gloomy. All the rooms were green lit. When he had time he would carry out his boyish intention of turning the back of the house into the front.

At any rate he was all right with the Bourne. Walking beside the stream, he felt it flowing to Tracy's. He wished that the stream were big enough to bear in fact, as it bore in imagination, the produce of Bourneside and the neighborhood into Barstow. It amused him to think that instead of "Doom!" the Waterfall now said "Boom!"

It was upon this full tide of activity that he met Lesbia Garnett. He met her at Mrs. Glanville's. But before he met her he had heard about her and was attracted by what he heard; her name suggested fire and softness combined, and there were stories about her courage and generosity and not so much unconventionality as apparent ignorance of any guide to conduct but the impulse of the moment. She had saved a child from drowning in the Regent's Canal, and befriended a woman of the streets, and she was not yet twenty-six. People spoke her name like the sound of a trumpet. She was the mingled pride and astonishment of her father, a widower, who wrote books about common

law. He couldn't account for her, anyhow, was the way Mrs. Glanville described his attitude.

The meeting was arranged, with a certain amount of joking which George thought rather tiresome. He was prepared to be disappointed. But the moment he saw Lesbia Garnett he knew that she was the woman for him. She was an amber-eyed, golden-skinned blonde, tall and deep-chested, with the voice of a Creole. The softness implied in her name was more apparent than the fire; she moved slowly and spoke indolently, though with singular directness. When she laughed it was: "God's in His Heaven."

George never knew how many people there were in the room that June evening. In his memory of it there was an applauding crowd, and there *must* have been a band. When he was introduced to Lesbia he held her hand for a moment in perfect unconsciousness and then led her to a seat. Listening to her first remarks, he noted with approval that she was a person of no great intelligence but strong good sense. He had expected to find her tiresomely brilliant or wilfully erratic. As he bent to her, talking with a curious earnestness about his own affairs, as if they had to be made clear, she sat up looking half scared, half amused, but

evidently not displeased. He found himself observing: "She's as golden-hearted as golden-headed."

Afterward, he could never be quite sure that he did not call her "Lesbia" from the beginning. Her other name was an impertinence, an irrelevance—except as it suggested her eyes. For them he found extravagant epithets—even "leonine." They flared when she spoke of Rome. And garnets should certainly go on her golden throat. She answered his questions about her tastes and doings with agitated obedience, as if he had a right to know. Yes, she had been to Barstow—or rather Cleeve. It made her sleepy. No, she didn't care much about walking, though she loved the country, particularly in autumn,—to sit about in an orchard and eat grapes. She was horribly greedy.

At some point she said: "You are taller than I expected, and I thought you would have a beard," but whether she compared him with a previous description or the destined man of her imagination was not clear, nor did it seem to matter. Unless he were very much mistaken she was ready for him, or, for the matter of that, for any likable man. He did not suppose that she had, nor did he wish her to have, any great quickness or subtlety

of emotion. Almost any likable man might rouse her emotions, and once roused, they would "set" like blossom. Loyalty would be almost a defect in her. It would have seemed natural to buy her. She must be snapped up. While they were talking in their corner George was dimly conscious of her small, rather prim-faced father, somewhere in the offing, putting up his glasses with an expression of "I say!"

Somebody asked Lesbia to sing, and she laughed appealingly and said: "Oh, I *can't* sing to-night," and George scowled at the disturber. It was only when he understood that the young people were preparing for an impromptu dance — Dolly Glanville almost jerked his chair away from under him — that he suddenly recognized that he must have been behaving in an extraordinary manner.

He did not care in the least. He meant to have her, and the apologies could be made afterward. When they rose, Lesbia came to his arms as if the dance had been arranged from the beginning of all time. She looked a little dazed, and he said: "Have I been shouting at you?" for that was what he felt. She shook her head, with half-closed eyes, and her hand involuntarily tightened on his shoulder. Oh, undoubtedly she was ready.

He gave himself up to the fun of the evening, perfectly aware of a friendly simmer of curiosity, but waiting his chance. Mr. Garnett made nervous attempts to engage him in conversation, following him about, getting spun round by the dancers, until Mrs. Glanville had almost to hold him down in her lap — as she said afterward. George was not ready for Mr. Garnett. This chance came with the sudden recognition of curtains. He danced her down the room and out, half wishing that he had to cut his way with her through the friendly crowd, and discovered the little alcove where Dolly kept her books.

“Will you marry me?” he said, and she, still panting from the dance, said: “Oh, yes!” but desperately rather than eagerly. He laughed exultantly, with her hands in his. “But you must talk to my father about it,” she said, and dodged him. He was well content; if roused she might cry or even faint. With “Come along, then,” he took her back, and they were dancing again before anybody but the more observant had missed them. “Don’t say a word,” he said when he released her.

When at last he was alone with her and her father, Mr. Garnett finished the sentence that he seemed to have been beginning all the evening:

"I say! You're a tremendous fellow!" George laughed uproariously. He felt a tremendous fellow. "I'll explain the whole thing, sir," he said, but Lesbia put her hands over her ears and said: "Oh, not to-night," and then, with an adorable duck of her head on to her father's arm, "Oh, I'm ashamed."

George wanted to walk with them to Cornwall Terrace, where they lived. It was absurd, he said, that anybody should want to drive on this perfect night. But Mr. Garnett said, "No, no, Lesbia must go to bed," and kept edging between her and George on the pavement, while the servant whistled for a cab, as if he thought that George really meant to pick her up and carry her off to his den-oh, as Mrs. Glanville said.

When they had gone, George followed them on foot, to see her house, and walked round Regent's Park before he returned to his hotel in the Strand. He remembered that he had not kissed her, and was glad. It was perfectly ridiculous that they could not be married to-night. The reflection that the lapse which had kept him from Mary Festing had not entered his head in speaking to Lesbia Garnett made him halt for a moment, but he said, "Oh, absurd!" and went on again. He was

older now; he saw things in proportion. Besides, Lesbia was warmer, saner, more complete, more human. He laughed out when he thought of his previous conceptions of love; his pale moonsickness for Mary Festing and his nasty craving for the other. Oh, yes, Lesbia could and would laugh at that.

He was at the house at nine o'clock the next morning. She slipped into the room, shy for a moment, and then they met breast to breast with closed eyes.

"You're quite sure?" he said, holding her off to see her eyes.

"If you love me," she said, and hid her face again. She was absolutely perfect, he said to himself. She would not even pretend to a sudden romantic passion. More than anything he felt his extraordinary luck. It was quite obvious that any good fellow might have had the same luck; he had only come at the right moment.

"When will you marry me?" he said.

"Whenever you like," she said, keeping only her eyes from him. He wanted to make it next week, but she did not think that her father would agree to such —

"Common-sense?" he said.

"Yes — common-sense," she said, with a wave of color under her golden skin.

The interview with Mr. Garnett was good-humored impatience on one side and technical hesitation on the other. The only thing that bothered Mr. Garnett was the absence of precedent. If George could have stated a case the thing might have been settled in five minutes. Mr. Garnett admitted — gloried in it — that Lesbia always did what she wanted, and, as far as George was concerned, he was completely satisfied. His good friend, Mrs. Glanville, was recommendation enough for him. He was immensely complimentary about the family name; Burroughs and Tracy had stood for probity and dignity, and Tracy's was only proof of adaptability to environment in these days of more extended enterprise.

"But, I say, you know," he kept saying. "One evening. Isn't it fearfully precipitate?"

Recognizing the essential unpracticality of the legal mind, George suppressed all practical arguments — such as that it always is fearfully precipitate — and talked of Lesbia's obvious desirability. He couldn't have done better. He had the history of Lesbia from the cradle, with fond paternal chuckles over her headstrong, or rather, heart-

strong ways. "Since her dear mother died she has twirled me round her little finger." The origin of the stories that George had heard about Lesbia was made clear; it was evident that the paternal mind had even colored the stories a little. With secret amusement George recognized that the father might have given to the most scandalous adventurer — as long as he were appreciative — what the lawyer made a business of hesitating to bestow on himself. It was remarkable that Lesbia hadn't been snapped up — and gave a flattering view of her taste. The truth was that the thing had to be talked over, and when it had been sufficiently talked over Mr. Garnett gave the blessing that he had been more than ready to give at the beginning. To the legal mind the discussion served all the purposes of an extended courtship.

The swift courtship that followed was a deepening of delight. She was even simpler than he had supposed; in some ways adorably stupid. If her laugh said, "God's in His Heaven," her conduct assumed that "All's right with the world." Brought up against any evidence of cruelty or meanness that most people learn to take for granted, she blazed. "Horribly greedy" turned out to be — whatever the opposite for euphemism may be

— for a healthy appreciation of the good things of life. She was never so happy as when basking in the sun. Yet she was very far from having the temperament of the odalisk. her appearance might have suggested. Her management of her father's house indicated a real domesticity, and she loved children. "She shall have hundreds of children," said George to himself extravagantly.

Less from necessity than in order to test her soundness, he told her that there had been another woman. She used his own word.

"Nasty boy," she said, "you might have waited for me." Then, after a moment, she added: "But I expect you did her good."

Though he would not have dared to put the thought into words, he felt that, somehow, she was right. Both the lapse itself and his remorse for it might be put down to his too idealistic conception of human love.

They were married within the month, and he carried her off to Spain. Acting on Mrs. Glanville's advice, he had meant to take her South; but they happened to break their journey at San Sebastian, and so discovered the Basque Provinces. For the next three weeks they loafed about in villages with names, as Lesbia said, "like lizards,"

her favorite beasts. They stopped at Durango; where Carlism is talked under the wide portico of the church, and Guernica, of the famous "Tree." George played pelota with the men, and studied their almost Chinese cultivation of the soil; and the girls would link arms with Lesbia as in soundless *alpargatas* they trod the *paseo* on Sunday afternoons to the bubble and squeak of the *dúlsinya* and *tamboril*. When George spoke of his wife, they laughed knowingly. They called her "*La Gaupa*", and made her bare her head and carry a carnation in her mouth, and taught her to dance the *Zortzico* and to sing *Guernicaco Arbola* — which is the Basque national anthem.

It was only the feeling, that, having come so far, they ought to see some of the lions, that made them leave these friendly people and pay a flying visit to Burgos, Madrid and Toledo. When the train had ascended the narrow Pass of Pancorbo and they were upon the tawny plain of Old Castile, George began to feel vaguely disturbed. Something in the grave landscape called to a part of him that was not fulfilled in his love for the tranquil woman at his side. He felt it most of all in Toledo, that "cry in the desert" which embodies the spiritual aspiration of Spain.

Lesbia herself helped to interpret the feeling. They were sitting one evening under the arcade of a café in the Zocodover, the irregular place which forms the social center of Toledo. Immediately opposite to them was the horseshoe arch that leads to the house of Cervantes, and Lesbia began to tease George about "Don Quixote."

"There's something of him about you," she said, "though you don't look it. There's a little central George that doesn't belong to me, and I'm sure there's a Dulcinea somewhere."

He said the obvious thing, but, holding his arm, she said composedly:

"No, I'm the faithful Sancho Panza. But you can tilt at your old windmills for her, so long as you'll be nice and comfy with me."

It was then that there came up the steps under the archway a tall woman bearing a water jar on her head. Her eyes were grave and she walked with dignity. Upon the level she began to cry in a piercing tone, "*A-gua fresca!*" as if it were the water of life.

"Isn't she like Mary Festing?" said Lesbia.

The likeness would not have struck him, but he understood what she meant. It was in the character of remoteness. He said something about the

Moorish blood in Toledo, and remarked that when he first met Mary Festing she made him think of somebody out of the *Arabian Nights*.

"But do you know Mary Festing?" he said.

"I met her at Mrs. Glanville's," said Lesbia. "I'm sure she's a darling, though she frightened me a little."

George was beginning to feel that Mary Festing was a confounded nuisance.

"Oh, Mary's too bright and good for anything," he said.

Lesbia laughed comfortably.

"Of course she doesn't appeal to men," she said, "but I believe she would do for the little central George. I shall cultivate her, and then when you're tired of kisses you can go off together and talk about souls."

At the time he could afford to enter into the joke, but he hoped that Lesbia wasn't going to keep it up. He had thought that he was done with Mary Festing.

CHAPTER XVIII

DIRECTLY after their return to Bournside George began to put his house in order. He had now a leading motive in his vague ideas of reconstruction. He would make the whole place a setting for his jewel. She must have sun, plenty of sun. Her ways must be wide and smooth, because she moved slowly and didn't much care for walking.

Lesbia dismissed his proposal that they should go into a cottage while the alterations were being made; she wanted to watch her home a-building; to have it grow in her heart, so that it should be scamped neither in workmanship nor love. She would hate to step into a ready-made paradise. For the present they could picnic very well in a corner among the dreams and bogies of his boyhood, and every evening, when the workmen were gone, they would peer and kiss by candle-light among the giant shadows of the empty unfinished rooms.

George got down from London a young architect

named Ledward, whose acquaintance he had made through Darragh, and with Lindrop to supply imagination, they held council together. The men sat about and smoked cigarettes and argued, while Lesbia — Kate had frocked her divinely — was made to stand here, to come in at that door, or lean at that window. All agreed upon one large room with a great hearth, and a wide welcoming entrance from the flagged court, where in childhood George had crept illicitly round to the kitchen or to nip up the steps into the Orchard, and a window looking west into the twilight of the Side Lawn; but the angle of the hearth and the turn of the staircase — broad in the tread and shallow in the rise, because of the way she moved — were matters that needed consideration. Besides, as Lesbia insisted, there must be no disturbing the general atmosphere of Bourneside. There must be only a fulfilment of the dreams of his boyhood. “As if they had flowered in the sun — that is, if you really are happy now?” It is to be feared that Ledward and Lindrop had their trials.

Ledward said austerely that the thing couldn't be done. Sentiment was sentiment, and building was building.

"Is that why most modern houses are so inconvenient, Mr. Ledward?" said Lesbia sweetly.

Lindrop, who would have given her a Moorish pavilion with Norman piers if she had asked for it, backed her up. He said that modern architects had no imagination. But when Ledward asked him how he proposed to do it, he could only make little noises in his throat and vague lines in the air. It was Lesbia who had to show the way.

"Don't you see, Mr. Ledward," she said, sinking down beside him, "it's the four gables that must be kept. Particularly the cheeky way they butt — isn't that the word? — up against the long back of what is now the front — if you understand what I mean. There's the sly little window of the room across the landing, where George used to creep out when he wanted to do Alpine climbing, and didn't break his precious neck. If you come up into the Orchard you can see it winking at the apple-tree."

Ledward, averting his eyes, as if he were afraid she might imitate the window, said that he understood all that —

"Well," said Lesbia, with an impressive hand on his arm, "'all that,' as you call it, can— *must* — be left as it is. We have to do with the ground

floor. It's just a matter of knocking three rooms into one — the laundry, the storeroom and what used to be the library where George did his lessons — and you'll observe that two of them are already flagged; the very best foundation for a block floor, I should say."

With a not too steady hand Ledward made a rough sketch while she almost leaned upon him.

"Yes," she said encouragingly, "you've got the idea. As for the top floor — when you've thrown out your jolly central landing, and decided exactly where the staircase is to arrive, the four rooms under the gables will hardly need alteration. Mr. Lindrop shall treat them imaginatively — with a view to the temperament of probable guests. The — the family bedroom — you see, is over the kitchen. It gets the dawn. But we can have a south window as well, to complete your front; and you'll have to knock a doorway through into the little room that used to be Amelia's. That will be George's dressing-room. He can lean out of the window over the porch, poor thing, between the rose and the jasmine, and yearn to Dulcinea."

So, with interruptions and excursions, they worked it out. The dining-room could remain where it was. Nobody, said Lesbia, wanted sun

at meals, except, perhaps, at breakfast. For the matter of that, they could have a little breakfast-room to the right of the porch, with an east window looking into the Yard. The nursery, too, should be where it had been before George desecrated it with his old rubbish. They could let in the sun by making windows in the back wall overlooking the valleys between the gables.

Truly, George felt, his life was now fronting the sun. He was domesticating his dreams. What in childhood had been a hollow feeling in his stomach was now translated into gladness of heart. Thus the flagged way round the back of the house, though enticing, had always filled him with vague apprehensions. He perceived now that the reason was that the Orchard was higher, and its hedge flung a green shade. The hedge must come down, and the ground should be terraced up to the level of the tennis-courts. Opposite the welcoming entrance to what was now to be the front of the house there should be steps — again broad in the tread and shallow in the rise, because of the way Lesbia moved — and flanking the steps there should be many flowers. They would go up, he and she, with their children about them; and the difference between the way they would go, and the way he

had nipped up the Orchard steps as a child, was the difference between advancing upon joy with open arms in the eye of the sun and darting into it with the sense of playing truant from life.

Beyond the tennis-courts the Orchard, except for judicious renewal, should remain as it was. They would go, following the Bourne, to the deep and rich activities of Gardiner's field and look toward Tracy's, where those activities found their final expression.

Not the least part of his happiness was in the sense of living with the Bourne. Remembering his dream on his first night in London — how he tried to twist the needle of his compass round against the current of the Bourne — he was half inclined to believe that some of the perplexities of his childhood had been due to the fact that he was facing up-stream. He remembered his impression of the front of the house; it cowered against an influence. With the house turned round back to front, his life and the Bourne would flow in the same direction. Whether or not there was anything in it, the fancy amused him. He was right with the Bourne.

Then an idea came to him that gave him childish pleasure. He intended to have electric light.

With Ledward he had already discussed the question of motive power: an engine driven by hydraulic pressure from the water-main, such as was used for blowing the organ up at the church, or a windmill, such as he already used for the irrigation of Gardiner's field. Suddenly he thought of the Waterfall. He would harness "Old Growler." Quite apart from the practical advantages — it would not only drive his dynamo, but supersede the windmill in Gardiner's field, which had never been quite satisfactory — there was an imaginative pleasure in the idea that the Waterfall which had disturbed his childhood should now light his home. He was domesticating not only his dreams, but the very source of them, and the slight sense of daring only added to the fun of the thing. It was almost profane, he thought, as he watched the water coming down straight with its transient quiver like the shaking of spears. Perhaps when he had harnessed "Old Growler" he would finally lay that unfulfilled part of him which had so unaccountably awakened upon the tawny plain of Old Castile.

Before the end of the year the work was finished; the house was remade in the image of their love, yet not so altered as to banish the associations of

his childhood. His dreams had mellowed in her warm humanity. Like the body of a violin, the house rang true to the vibrations of a sane and joyous life. Together they would see his queer fancies about the house repeated more sunnily in their children. Instead of an unexplained attic, where Things romped in the night, there should be a secret chamber, filled with their common memories of the house's renewal, to baffle the little brains and perplex the little measuring hands and clambering feet. Love should lurk on the stairs and confidence ripen like wine in the cellar. Instead of in the sound of "Doom!" the meaning of the Waterfall should be expressed in the friendly glow of a light that little fingers could control at will.

With every day he was more convinced of the success of his marriage. Nothing pleased him more than the sort of interest that Lesbia took in his affairs; she was not anxious to be consulted, but she was never bored, and every now and then she would make a suggestion, always wise and human, which showed that she followed sympathetically what was in his mind. In her apparently idle, unobtrusive way she learned all about what was being done in Gardiner's field, and it

was often to her that Andrews came for directions. She seemed to have the knack of interpreting George's ideas before he had reasoned them out. Under her, even during the muddle of reconstruction, the house ran smoothly, though she never seemed to be busying herself about household affairs. Fussiness and irritation could not survive in her presence.

At Tracy's she was adored. Without interfering in any department she took in everything with a quiet eye and never forgot a name. Through her the good-fellowship that there had always been between George and the staff became something like family affection. Observing that the tennis-court at Bourneside was being wasted, she got the young men and women out to play on Saturday afternoons, and when the weather failed she started a Glee Club.

Apart from the care of the house, her only personal occupation was music. It seemed to be a gift for which she was not intellectually responsible. George declared that she "read" with her fingers alone, and often she could not remember the name of the composer she happened to be playing. It was all just music to her. When she sang, or rather crooned, she always closed her

eyes, lifting her head like an animal bemused. It was a long time before George felt perfectly convinced that there was not a trace of black blood in her. Oddly enough, it would have appealed to him as an attraction; as if she summed up the women of all races.

Without making any apparent effort to entertain, she quickly became a hostess. It was this that impressed George's relations, who, though they had given his wife a proper welcome, were a little uncertain whether they ought to approve such haste in wedding. Like Mr. Garnett, they wanted precedent. George was well satisfied, because he saw that their instinctive liking outran their judgment; each member of the quartet was a little more friendly than he or she allowed the others to see; with an effect of intrigue that was very amusing to witness, particularly when it came out that both Mrs. Walter and Amelia had privately engaged Lesbia as godmother to their respective hopes. Lesbia blinked in her cat-like way, betrayed no secrets, and showed no favor.

"She just lies about and people come to her," said Amelia, and Walter summed up the situation by saying to George with good-humored envy:

"The fact of the matter is, old chap, you got

Bourneside under false pretenses. Who'd have thought that the dear old place was going to wake up like this?"

George could not deny that he enjoyed the popularity of his house. With happiness and success his social instincts were developing. He liked to have people about him so long as he did not have to bother about tiresome divisions of class, and Lesbia seemed to have the gift of making people forget them, so that Bourneside promised to become a little center of enlightenment.

As is often the case with delicate children, George had grown into a strong man. At thirty he was in the full enjoyment of all his powers. Following the suggestion of Lesbia's remark on their first meeting, he had grown a beard, so that he now resembled a more active edition of his father — who was still his hero. He dressed in rough clothes, rolled a little in his walk, and swung his arms. People who did not like him said that he swaggered. That was not true, but he unconsciously dramatized his enjoyment of health, happiness and success. He saw pictures of the future, and lived up to them.

One picture that often came into his mind was a subject for a modern Rubens. He saw himself

and Lesbia with their children on an autumn evening in the Court in front of the house. Lesbia should be on his knee with grapes in her lap. He would have one arm about her, and in the other hand he would hold a goblet of golden wine. Five or six children would be grouped about them with books or fruit in their hands, and perhaps there would be a messenger just arrived with important papers.

Exactly why this picture should have presented itself he could not have said, but he saw it vividly, and was determined that one day it should be painted. He doubted if Darragh would be the painter; Darragh, with all his gifts, would not be able to suggest the right atmosphere of health, good living, prosperity and family affection.

At the beginning of the year, when the first novelty of the house had worn off, he took Lesbia up to London. When at Mrs. Glanville's they met Mary Festing, he wondered that he could ever have imagined himself to be in love with anybody so far from his present ideal of the perfect woman. He perceived how true had been Doctor Raymond's description of her; she was of the vestal type, a natural celibate. All her emotions went into her work — though even there they were, to George's

mind, a little thin. As the critics said, her novels, though clever and poetical, were lacking in warm humanity.

The meeting between the two women interested him. Lesbia kissed Mary impulsively and said: "You knew George when he was a boy." Mary laughed and said: "Yes, we fought even then." Mary's manner irritated him a little. He thought her patronizing and superior — as if in her heart she despised domestic joy. He wished that she were not slightly the taller of the two. She held Lesbia's hands and looked down at her with grave eyes that were yet a little amused. Lesbia, on the other hand, was inclined to make too much of Mary for his liking. After all, she was the married woman. It gave him satisfaction, of which he was immediately ashamed, to observe that Mary was rather shabbily dressed.

Mary, when he found himself talking to her, made him feel aggressive. She was the only person he knew to whom he wanted to swagger. With a little provocation, he would have boasted to her about the success of Tracy's. Fortunately, however, a subject came up which saved him from this egregiousness. It was the time of the South African War, and a remark of Mary's told him that

she was a strong Pro-Boer. George himself had by no means made up his mind about the subject; he felt that the war was a mistake, and he instinctively distrusted the people in whose interests it had been begun; but Mary's remark aroused all his patriotism.

"I suppose Darragh has talked you over," he said.

Mary admitted that Darragh agreed with her, but claimed her own sympathies.

"I'm always on the side of the little people," she said.

Until then it had not occurred to him that they were talking about the same subject as at their first meeting. It must have come to her at the same moment, for she flushed deeply and plucked at her dress. Somehow it made him angry that she should remember, but he laughed, and said, "Yes, I know," as if to imply that the memory was not embarrassing to him. Then Lesbia came over and said: "What are you two sparring about?"

"They always do," said Mrs. Glanville, and Mary laughed, and George felt that "sparring" would do well enough to describe their relations. He perceived that he had yet to have it out with Mary Festing.

When they were leaving, Lesbia pressed Mary to come down to Bourneside.

"You can have George's old room at the top of the house to write in," she said; and then, with pleased recollection, "but of course you will remember it — the room that used to be the nursery. It has six windows now."

"How extravagant!" said Mary, making great eyes at her, as one might at a child. She did not seem at all keen to accept the invitation, and George wished that Lesbia would not be so pressing. In the hansom he said something of the sort, and Lesbia said quickly:

"You don't mind, do you?"

It was the first time she had asked him such a question, and it touched him strangely.

"Of course not, you goose," he said, pressing her hand, "not if you like her."

"I like her extraordinarily," said Lesbia in a reflective tone, as if surprised at her own feelings; and then added, "and I want her to like me."

"Oh, Mary is quite a good sort," he said indulgently, "but she's too intellectual. All there is of her goes into her books."

"That's only because she wants petting and feeding up," said Lesbia, "and I believe that if you

really took the trouble to get below the surface you'd find her interesting as a woman." Then she laughed mischievously and went on: "Besides, she will be good for you — for the central George. I know you better than you do yourself. There's a little poet in you that mustn't be let die of contentment."

It was all so innocently said that George could only give proofs of his contentment. "The poet that could not survive you is not worth rearing," he said. But when he helped her out of the hansom at the door of their hotel he had the strange thought that Lesbia must be protected against the influence of Mary Festing.

Lesbia, who was extremely anxious to make the acquaintance of all his friends, asked him to take her to Darragh's studio. Feeling that he had rather neglected Darragh of late years, he gladly seized the opportunity, and in this case the introduction was a triumphant success. Darragh showed his admiration of Lesbia in every glance. She, frankly ignorant of painting, was interested in everything she saw, but most in Darragh, and George had the remorseful feeling that she was wondering why he had not made more of the friendship. There was no reason why he hadn't, except the

feeling that Darragh had grown out of sympathy with him. He reflected that there were things in his friendship with Darragh, as with Mary, that he couldn't explain even to himself. But it would be easier now. That was the joy of Lesbia; she made all human relations easier.

Looking round the poorly furnished studio, he was at first inclined to think that Darragh's painting had not improved. He had changed his style. George had a keen appreciation of pictures, but his technical knowledge did not enable him to judge of more than good color and correct drawing. He had nothing to find fault with in Darragh's pictures — romantic landscapes with figures, and an unfinished portrait or two — in these respects, but they looked to him curiously flat, and the shapes of things seemed to have been wilfully altered. He tried to explain what he felt about them, and Darragh said modestly:

“I'm experimenting. It seems to me that things must be made to mean more, and I don't think you can do it by making them look more real. But if they don't come off with you, it shows that I haven't succeeded in getting the form right. It will come presently — at least I believe I'm on the right tack.”

At the time George did not quite understand what

he meant, and it was clear from Darragh's casual remarks that his present work was even less popular than his more realistic painting had been. But when George and Lesbia had left the studio, after asking Darragh to dine with them at their hotel, he found that the pictures he had seen did come off with him in a curious way. They seemed to get down to a deeper layer of him than pictures generally did. He resented the effect a little, as if he were being made to confess his more intimate feelings about nature, but while he was trying to discover what it meant, Lesbia switched him off by saying: "I wonder if Mr. Darragh and Mary Festing will ever marry."

"Oh, I don't think so," he said, feeling slightly shocked.

"They are great friends, aren't they?" said Lesbia.

"Yes," he said, "but somehow one does not think of Mary as a marrying person."

Lesbia laughed and said: "Not indiscriminately, you Turk. Some women will marry anybody," she went on, pinching his arm, "and some are more exacting."

"That's only a ribald way of saying the same thing," he said. "Mary is a cold person." He

was half inclined to quote Doctor Raymond, but somehow it seemed feeble to do so.

“‘Cold hands and a warm heart,’” quoted Lesbia, as they paced along arm in arm. “Anyhow,” she added, “if Mary fell in love I believe she would be absolutely reckless.”

That made him laugh, and he said:

“Well, they’re a long time exploding, and I don’t think the delay is Darragh’s.”

“But she might marry him in the end to make *him* happy, stupid,” said Lesbia.

At the time he put it down to the match-making instinct of the happy wife. Nor when Darragh came to dinner, though he talked about Mary, did he say anything to suggest that there was any change in the brother-and-sisterly relations between them. By this time, George’s thoughts about Darragh’s pictures had taken a practical turn. With some diffidence, he asked him if he would do a poster for “Tracy’s.”

“I can’t get just what I want,” he said. “Old Lindrop makes a very pretty picture, but when you get across the road it all goes into a mush. And the other fellows don’t seem to have any idea beyond putting the actual thing on the hoardings. But your work seems to stick in the mind — quite

apart from what it represents. I think the outline has something to do with it. However, if you don't think it's coming down —"

"On the contrary," said Darragh, "it's a great compliment. That's exactly what I'm trying to do. To get there without people knowing. Of course, the thing must be treated differently to carry across the road instead of only across a small room, but it's the same principle. We've got to cure people of their intelligence before there's any chance for painting in this country."

The subject led them into an eager discussion, and, altogether, George felt that he was nearer to Darragh than he had been for some time. He put it down to Lesbia; she seemed to absorb everything in his nature that he had ever found embarrassing. When he was leaving, Darragh shyly expressed to George his admiration of Lesbia. He found the right word for her: "Giorgionesque." He would like to paint her in an autumnal landscape.

CHAPTER XIX

EARLY in June Lesbia gave birth to a daughter. It was at once evident that she was a born mother. She nursed the child herself, and behaved to it with that brooding animal fondness which is so much more significant than sentimental raptures. George was delighted. He wished to have many children; all his ideas ran in the direction of productiveness. But when Mary Festing came down in September George felt absurdly shy at meeting her in the presence of the child. He knew that she liked children, but his conception of her character led him to suppose that she must despise the human weakness implied in their origin. If she did she concealed the fact, and babbled over the baby as foolishly as any girl, though George was persuaded that her attitude to him was now subtly humorous. This kept him a little on the self-assertive side, as if he had to prove that he and his affairs were really important. But that was only when they happened to be alone together. In pub-

lic she seemed to acquiesce in the convention that they were always sparring.

The affection between her and Lesbia was too real to be questioned. Neither was demonstrative, but they seemed to fit into each other with the quiet assurance of complementary parts. When Mary was not working they spent most of their time in the Orchard with the baby between them. They might have been the contrasted guardians of infancy in an allegorical picture. Coming upon them, the black head and the tawny bent over the merely fluffy one, George was inclined to say, "Soul and body"—though he would not admit the full antithesis for what it implied. Lesbia had soul enough for him. She was Aphrodite Pandemos, "mother and lover of men"; Mary was—but even Artemis had stooped divinely. No; she was Pallas Athene by virtue of her trade. Physically, she did stoop divinely, but that was a mere trick. The habit of her trade—or possibly somebody, Darragh, for example, had told her that it gave concentration to her eyes and set off the nape of her neck. Even these coldly intellectual women were not above such vanities. He was quite ready to elaborate a theory that they were the real wantons of their sex. They had nothing

to give, and yet they claimed attention to their bodily charms. Poor old Darragh! In homely language, she ought to be smacked.

Although he was not in the least jealous of Lesbia's affection for Mary, its results occasionally irritated him. He was not "left out of it"—but rather the reverse. On his approach to the group the two women would open out to enclose him—as if, he said to himself, Mary were a complementary part of his domestic bliss. He felt inclined to say to Lesbia, "She's your friend, not mine." By this time Lesbia had got over her exaggerated respect for Mary, though she still treated her as a moral superior. Not, however, with envy, but in a lazy humorous way; a Sancho Panza way, as to a person too bright and good for anything.

Sometimes he caught himself wishing that a situation would arise in which he and Mary would be pulling Lesbia opposite ways. Then he and Mary could have it out at last. He knew that there were quite a lot of things he had saved up to get off to her, though, in cold blood, and without reasonable provocation, he could not say what they were. Apart from the satisfaction of having it out, he would like to see her flash out again as she had flashed out in the nursery at their first meeting. On

the rare occasions when he visited her in the room that had been the nursery, now, he talked to her rather stiffly about the views from the windows. It seemed a matter of principle not to be interested in her work that lay upon his desk. When Lesbia, enfolding them both in her warm slow smile, said luxuriously, "What a rich atmosphere Barbara will enjoy when she is big enough to play here — your childhood, and Mary's romances," he said, in a boyishly aggressive tone, "Well, at any rate, they won't mix"; and Mary laughed out as he had never heard her laugh before. Lesbia came down on his shoulder with, "You darling!" and for once he received the soft weight of her unresponsively, and said something about the over-subtlety of feminine humor.

With the best will in the world he could not continue to call Mary superior to his affairs. She made friends with Andrews, who said that she was "a very intelligent woman," and she took a healthy interest in Tracy's. Lindrop's efforts to hit the right note of sentimental regret with her without prejudice to his present admirers were amusing; though mingled with his amusement George had the sheepish recollection that once upon a time he had been concerned to know the exact relations

between Mary and Lindrop. He observed that Kate Flanders, though she evidently disapproved of Mary's clothes, regarded her with special interest. Kate had an unerring eye for problems of temperament. Lindrop was with them when George took Mary into Kate's department, and while they were talking Kate rolled a speculative eye from Mary to Lindrop, and then smiled compassionately, as if to say: "No, you're not the explanation, my good man." George would have liked to know what Kate thought of Mary. What made it all the more tantalizing was that when they came out Mary wanted to know all about Kate. She had heard Mrs. Glanville speak of her. George told her how loyally Kate had backed him up, how loyally everybody had backed him up, in fact, and Mary said: "After all, people are human, you see." He could never be quite sure that she was not laughing at him.

If she had any reserve about Tracy's, it was clearly not on account of what things were being done there. It was only his doing them that she seemed to find vaguely unsatisfactory. Not because they were unimportant in themselves, but either because they did not go far enough or were done with a wrong motive. She left him with the uneasy

inclination to ask her: "Well, what do you want?"

Unlike Lesbia, Mary was a good walker, and Lesbia was relentless in making George take her out. He was not in the least unwilling to do so, but for the implication that Lesbia saw in Mary something that she herself could not supply. If he wanted exercise, he was in no particular need of a companion. Nor did he believe that Mary really wanted him. Lesbia had a superstition that they were "good for" each other. "Now, Mary," she would say, "take him out and make him talk."

In the result the walks were pleasant enough. He was surprised to find how well Mary knew his country, though in the month or so that she had spent with the Markhams as a little girl she could not have made many excursions. Her knowledge was not so much topographical as atmospheric; she seemed to know what places "meant" for him. His own references to his childhood were curt and dry, conveyed in a grunt or a gesture as they swung through a lane or halted on a hill-top; and it was more often she than he who recalled them. Occasionally she remembered things he had forgotten. He concluded that Darragh had talked to her.

He did not take her to the Grove. He resented the feeling that kept him from doing so, but it had to be obeyed. Though he did not think it likely, he sometimes wondered if Lesbia had told her about Mrs. Lorimer. The only way in which Mrs. Lorimer bothered him now was in the reflection that while she had seemed an obstacle to Mary, when he imagined himself to be in love with her, she had not seemed an obstacle to Lesbia. In reason, there was a quite satisfactory explanation in Lesbia's human sympathy; but something beyond reason left him dissatisfied. There were moments when he had the tantalizing thought that it was not Mary herself, but some undefined relation between him and her, that was hurt by Mrs. Lorimer, but he could not work it out satisfactorily. Anyhow, as he admitted to himself, the practical result was that he could not take Mary into the Grove.

On their walks he generally found himself the active talker — partly from the desire to keep the conversation away from the associations of his childhood. It was a matter of real concern to him that both Mary and Darragh seemed very badly off. From the nature of their work he supposed that neither could expect any great popularity, but

he was inclined to believe that they did not get the most out of what commercial opportunities they respectively had. The results of his own investigations into the problems of shopkeeping led him to assume that the distribution of books and pictures was not any better managed than that of anything else. In the case of books he had proved it—so far as it could be proved in a provincial town. But when he talked to Mary about the subject she seemed contented with her small circulation. She admitted that there were stupidities, that the success of a novel was artificially limited by the pathetic reliance of possible readers on the ordinary channels of distribution, but she said:

“After all, the only success worth having is the success you can’t help.”

It sounded like a cry out of his boyhood, and called up a vivid picture of his interview with the Head of St. Piran’s. For a moment he was disconcerted. He had the obscure feeling that it somehow tampered with the foundations of Tracy’s, but he said to himself that he could reconcile that, and went on, impatiently:

“Yes, but you can at least meet it half-way.”

“If you can meet it with the whole of yourself,” she said rather breathlessly. He felt sure that she

was thinking of him rather than herself, and he was tempted to say: "Do you mean that I'm not getting the whole of myself into Tracy's?" but shirked it and said: "Ah, you're incorruptible."

They walked in silence for a few steps, and then she said:

"By the way, I've never thanked you for the way you've boomed me down here."

"Oh, that's Blaker — he's one of your fervents," he said.

"Ah, you're uncompromising," she said with a faint mimicry of his last remark but one.

He laughed, though he did not quite see what she was driving at, and went on: "No, but seriously, without conceding anything, it is possible to put, or to see that other people put, your work out to the best advantage." He spoke of Darragh's refusal to send to the Academy and his indifference to introductions that might lead to commissions for portraits. In the case of Darragh, Mary was willing to admit a neglect of opportunities.

"But he's absolutely unworldly," she said; "so it really amounts to the same thing. He wouldn't be completely himself if he hustled round."

The frankness with which she spoke of Darragh convinced George that there was nothing in Lesbia's

match-making speculations. There was no reason why Mary should hesitate to tell him if she and Darragh had any idea of getting married. Besides, so far as her being a helpmate to Darragh was concerned, it evidently wasn't necessary; her remarks showed the most intimate knowledge of his affairs. She went on to say that Darragh was now engaged upon some decorations for a schoolroom in the south of London. It was a commission that brought him little more than the cost of materials, but he had put more profitable work aside to carry it out.

That gave George an idea—or rather two. The first was that he might be able to get Darragh commissions for decorative panels in some of Lindrop's "interiors," Lindrop having now recognized that he could not paint up to the level of his designs; and the second was that possibly Mary's vague dissatisfaction with Tracy's was due to its having no sociological purpose.

He had observed that both Mary and Darragh were interested in "betterment" schemes. The interest, indeed, was reflected in her novels, and he had chaffed her about the risks of writing with a purpose. Her defense was that she didn't; but merely said what she felt about things. Apart

from that, she and Darragh were in the habit of East End-ing, as he called it. They lent a hand in settlement work, and had many friends among the labor people. George himself being unsympathetic, he only heard of their doings by casual allusions, and he had supposed that they represented not more than the vague socialistic aspirations of the artistic mind. In passing, he had noted as a paradox that Mary's temperamental coldness did not make her shrink from contact with the sort of people who might be described as publicans and sinners.

Now he began to wonder if what Mary missed in him were the social conscience. He rather hoped it was, because he felt that he could give a good account of himself in that respect. Like his father, he had a strong dislike of anything theoretical. He had got a little farther than sitting tight upon the land as a panacea, but he still believed that the best way to improve social conditions was for everybody to mind his own business. He did not set out to be a social reformer, but his notion of such was the enlightened despot. Cooperation might be encouraged, and he could show that Tracy's encouraged it not only in agriculture, but by providing a market for village industries.

In one or two cases it had revived them. Nor was he averse from the principle of profit-sharing; each of his employees had an interest in the concern. Moreover, though he would have disclaimed the wish to pose as a public benefactor, he had certain schemes in mind for the improvement of his native city. At present he had not enough capital to carry any one of them through unaided, and he preferred to wait until he had. Not from the wish to glorify himself, but because he believed that the best way to get anything done was to do it and, if necessary, ask for support afterward.

The idea that Mary was finding fault with him on sociological grounds amused him. He would welcome an opportunity to have a slap at the doctrinaires. He did not say anything at the moment, but during the rest of her visit he trailed his coat a little in that direction. Mary refused to be drawn into a personal attack, though her general remarks confirmed his belief that she did think him lacking in public spirit. He would hardly have admitted that her implied criticism had any practical effect upon him, but he found himself paying more particular attention than before to the way Tracy's worked out in relation to the community in general. He was half-consciously making out his case—

perhaps the first stage in the awakening of the social conscience.

One evening in December when he came home rather tired and grumpy from Tracy's, Lesbia greeted him with: "What did I tell you? — Miles and Mary are married."

He was unreasonably irritated. The first thought that came into his head was that Lesbia had been in their secret, but her shining face dismissed it, and as he took the letter from her hand, he said:

"Well, they might have told us."

"But aren't you glad?" said Lesbia, shaking his arm.

"Of course, I'm delighted," he said; "but it would have been more friendly of them to have taken us into their confidence."

"Oh, I can understand it perfectly," said Lesbia. "I'm not a bit surprised. They didn't want any fuss made, and they must have known that to people who knew them well it would seem rather — well, rather pedestrian. Miles is not like you, you savage. I can quite understand their being shy about it. They wanted to get it over first. Besides, we're the first people they've told except his mother."

Mary's letter to Lesbia was affectionate but quite unapologetic. They were married a fortnight ago at the registrar's and were now just back from Paris. For the present they intended to live in Mary's rooms.

There was nothing that any reasonable person could wonder at, and with Lesbia simmering at his elbow, George had to make worldly-wise remarks to conceal his repugnance.

"Didn't Mary give you any hint when she was here?" he said, as he folded up the letter.

"Not a word," said Lesbia, "though, of course, I had my own ideas."

"I believe you put it into her head," he said rather fatuously.

"I dare say we encouraged her," said Lesbia, with a comfortable little laugh. Then rubbing her cheek against his arm, she went on: "Oh, George, don't you understand? Mary is not a very young woman, and why shouldn't she have a little joy of her life? She knew that Miles was in love with her."

"But that's an old story," he said.

"I must say I don't quite understand why she kept him waiting," Lesbia admitted. "My own

idea," she went on after a pause, "is that Mary had some affair."

"Did she say so?" he said quickly.

"Not she," said Lesbia with scorn. "I once asked her if she had ever had a lover, and she laughed and opened her eyes — you know the way she does when she wants to put you off — and said: 'He wouldn't have me, my che-ild.' But she kissed me directly afterward," she added reflectively.

"Well, it's astonishing," he said.

Lesbia looked at him rather compassionately.

"You know, George," she said, "I can't help thinking that you somehow got a wrong idea about Mary. You put her on a sort of pedestal that she wouldn't in the least lay claim to. I believe she feels it a little. After all, women are not very different from men, only they're not so frank about it. Of course, men haven't the same opportunities of finding out, but I've never heard Mary say anything that would lead me to suppose that she was cold. I think you do her an injustice."

There was not an atom of reproach in it on her own account, but it made him feel that his notion of Mary was an injustice to Lesbia, and he kissed her remorsefully, saying:

“ I suppose I have got into the way of thinking her a bit of a prig.”

He wanted to get away and think it over. It was not so much the event as his own feelings about it that disturbed him. Until now he had not fully recognized how much Doctor Raymond's remark had weighed in his conception of Mary. He felt as if he had been cheated. That transferred his anger from Doctor Raymond to himself, and he said that it was all nonsense; that the truth of the matter was that his ideas of order had been upset. The disturbance was purely intellectual. He had thought of a woman in one way, and now he must think of her in another way, and the jolt was naturally disconcerting. The result was to make him unusually tender to Lesbia, as if to prove that they were the people who really understood, and they wrote a joint letter to the Darraghs, upbraiding them for their secretiveness, but congratulating them on their conversation to common-sense.

CHAPTER XX

IN five years Lesbia had borne him three children, with only a deepening of wisdom in her amber eyes to betray the cares of motherhood. She was mistress and wife in one, sleepily passionate and splendidly sane. His life with her continued to be a golden dream come true. If there were times when he was conscious of an unfulfilled part of himself that walked alone in a far place, he put it down to a defect of temperament, and turned to her arms to be made whole again.

George soon got used to the idea of Darragh's marriage, and he found that it put their friendship on a more comfortable footing than before. He had long looked upon Darragh and Mary as natural allies in a way of thinking that was different from and, to a certain extent, tacitly critical of his own. They stood for plain living and high thinking, the cult of the "little people." He had enough sympathy with their point of view to make encounters amusing, and Lesbia was an admirable audience. She, as she said, "held their coats."

The first time George met the Darraghs after their marriage he was struck by Mary's protective attitude to her husband. She had always kept a sisterly eye upon his worldly affairs, but now she was, at any rate to George, a little defiant. The impression he got was that she thought of him in relation to Darragh very much as he had once thought of her in relation to Lesbia — though he could not find a reason in either case. Certainly his feelings with regard to Darragh were never anything but affectionate, and he concluded that Mary was afraid that he would try to tempt her husband away from the paths of artistic rectitude. He had no such intention, though he took every opportunity to put attractive work in Darragh's way.

The Darraghs often came down to Bourneside, and one summer the Tracys spent a holiday with them in Cornwall, where George was glad to renew his acquaintance with Miles' mother, whom he had only seen at rare intervals since the days of St. Piran's. He liked her as much as ever, though to him her manner was now slightly nervous and apologetic. It made him feel that he had drifted away from the atmosphere in which she had formed her ideas about him. Since Miles and Mary re-

mained in it, he supposed her disappointment in him to be only natural.

Friendly as they were, he could never quite get rid of the feeling that the Darraghs thought he had become a rather vulgarly successful person. This only amused him, as did also Mary's critical regard for his treatment of Lesbia. Evidently she thought him a masterful husband. He put this down to feministic learnings, of which Lesbia was innocent. He said to himself that Mary did not understand boon-fellowship between husband and wife, and he was always half hoping that she would say or do something to enable him to have it out with her. They still sparred. Her actual comments were never more than humorous. One afternoon when he joined the three as they sat in their favorite place in the Court, and greeted Lesbia rather boisterously, Mary spoke of his "Buss me, Kate" manner. Darragh seized upon the phrase with delight, and made a drawing of George as Bluff King Hal. But many people were inclined to think him exuberant. Tom Burchell, for example, who had succeeded Doctor Fleetwood, asserted that George was an early G. P. He would solemnly tap his knees, compare his pupils, and make him repeat compromising polysyllables.

As yet the Darraghs had no children, not, apparently, to their serious disappointment. They were poor, they moved about a great deal, and all their habits were undomestic. But Mary was devoted to George's eldest little girl, Barbara. When she was at Bourneside the two were inseparable and Lesbia declared that she would leave the child's moral education to Mary. This, though humorously said, caused George some slight irritation. Lesbia, though charmingly indolent, was not lazy or neglectful, but in the presence of Mary she affected an exaggerated hedonism — as if conscious of overwhelming competition in opposite virtues. Sometimes George wondered if his old quarrel with Mary was going to be fought out over Barbara.

Meanwhile his worldly affairs had prospered. Tracy's had sent out branches into all the principal towns in the Western counties, and its importance as a commercial organization was now recognized to be a definite factor in local politics. Any speculative proposal for the benefit of trade or agriculture had to pass the standard of Tracy's. It compelled the mere financier to show something more solid than a promising prospectus, while, on the other hand, it anticipated the benefits to be derived from combinations among

actual producers. With a fair market in every important center, and a convenient system of collection by road motors, there was no inducement to cooperative proposals.

As yet George kept everything in his own hands, with no ostensible object but the profit to be derived from his enterprise. A certain percentage of profit was divided by scale among the staff and those who supplied the material; but, except that every suggestion was welcomed and considered in council with heads of departments, nobody shared in the general direction of policy. George began to see, however, that if he were to go forward, and particularly if he were to carry out any of his more speculative ideas, which involved building, such as a repertory theater, a concert hall and an art gallery, he must either issue shares among those who were practically interested in Tracy's, or invite capital from outside. In either case there would have to be a division of control.

The Barstow premises he had already rebuilt. Ledward was the architect. When George first discussed the matter with him, Ledward talked rather indifferently about styles. What was Tracy's idea; Renaissance, Neo-Classic, Queen Anne or what?

"The shop style," said George.

"I suppose you know that there aren't any examples?" said Ledward, eyeing him with interest.

"Well, there's your chance," said George. "I give you a free hand, on condition that you build me a place in which nothing is considered but the practical needs of a modern shop. I don't want a temple or a palace or a town hall. I want a shop, and I want it to look like a shop and nothing but a shop. At the same time, if you don't think that a place can be savagely a shop and still the most beautiful building in the world, you'd better think it over before you agree to take on the job."

"Don't you worry about that," said Ledward. "I was afraid you wanted another striking example of modern commercial architecture in the something-or-other-style."

He said that though there were no shops in England, he thought he could get a few hints from Germany. The result not only satisfied George, but made the beginning of Ledward's reputation. People said that he had reconciled use and beauty. He said that all the howlers he had ever seen were the result of the purely modern superstition that they were not the same thing.

Now, of course, Ledward was keen to build a

theater in the theater style, and a concert hall in the concert-hall style, and an art gallery in the art-gallery style. Also the duchess was interested. George recognized her moral value, but was not so sure about her artistic ideas, which were rather exclusively modern. She wanted to startle people; he wanted to give them the plays and the music and the pictures that they wanted without arousing their suspicions. If he let in the duchess—the duke, he understood, was at her command—he would have to consider her tastes.

Altogether, he perceived that he was now approaching a crisis in his career. Having proved his ability as a business man, he was receiving friendly pressure from several directions. Subject to a finger in the pie, he could have what money he wanted for the asking, and the local authorities were more than cordial to his ideas. But the strongest pressure toward extending his activities at some cost of individual freedom came from inside Tracy's itself. Some time ago George had found that the financial side of the business was getting more than he could manage without limiting his more practical energies. His instinct for the right man sent him to Shelmerdine. Since Burroughs and Tracy's Bank had lost its identity in the larger

personal concern, he had no sentimental scruples against approaching Shelmerdine, who was now cashier at Exeter, and he secured him as financial manager of Tracy's.

Shelmerdine had the characteristics of his race. He knew everything about prices; nothing whatever about values. Without a fluctuating margin created by the lapses between supply and demand, the Jew would starve in the midst of plenty; value must be translated into price before he becomes aware of its existence. In his own department Shelmerdine was admirable; he found good investments for spare capital, checked waste, and encouraged punctuality in the settlement of accounts with both producers and customers. But he could not be trusted outside the handling of accounts. He was unable to distinguish between what people wanted and what they could be induced to buy, and his only test of capacity in subordinates was "smartness," which meant skill in evading the customer's demand, so that his influence in the sale-rooms was always demoralizing. He had to be kept severely chained to his office.

Here George found him stimulating and amusing. Shelmerdine was full of ideas — always ideas for making money breed money. On the other hand,

he had the racial instinct for reading other people's desires and pandering to them. He would talk to George by the hour about his "grand schemes," which he evidently saw in terms of gilt and plush. "Very nice little theater you could have down here. I tell you the Empire would be a fool to it. But of course you want capital. Now I know a party —"

George knew perfectly well that, so far as the theater was concerned, Shelmerdine, though scrupulously honest and loyal to Tracy's, was only playing up to him. He would have talked with the same enthusiasm if George had proposed a "line" in cheap jewelry or bogus old masters. He recognized that George had the gift of creating prices, and he could not be happy until it was fully exploited. His motive was not personal gain but abstract reverence for profit. But though George knew that Shelmerdine approached the business from what in his own opinion was the wrong end, he had great faith in his financial judgment, and little by little he was losing his acute sense of the difference between financial and commercial enterprise. After all, capital was a sort of raw material. You couldn't do really big things without it. And so far as the division of control was concerned, it

was only a matter of Tracy's, Limited, instead of Tracy's. He would still be managing director.

George got into the way of writing "Tracy's, Limited," on blotting paper, to see how it looked. Undoubtedly it meant that Tracy would be limited. Sometimes he consented to meet the parties who, either directly or through Shelmerdine, had expressed a desire to put money into Tracy's. He would like to get an idea of how far Tracy would be limited. Often, though not always, the parties were of the conquering race. Generally they were already Somebody, Limited, and their precise hobby, whether coal, iron, motor-cars or tin mines, was always the least part of their conversation. It was in the character of promoters that they addressed themselves to him. They were always immensely complimentary about Tracy's—as far as it went. Whenever the question of control came up, they said in effect: "Don't you make any mistake about that, Mr. Tracy. We recognize business talent when we see it. Our only anxiety is to extend your opportunities, with, of course, a reasonable return upon our capital."

At last there came a proposal that was too important in its bearings to be treated in anything but a practical spirit. Mr. Pope, the managing

director of Sherlock's, Limited, the biggest department store in London, asked for an interview. He came and talked very frankly. Sherlock's had branches in Liverpool and Manchester and in most of the important towns in the Midlands. So far they had not touched the West of England, and they were prepared to admit that Tracy's had got ahead of them there. Tracy's methods were not theirs, but there could be no doubt that, with a certain class of customer, Tracy's filled the bill. That class of customer, in greater or smaller numbers, existed everywhere. Properly backed, there was room for Tracy's in every town in the kingdom, even in London itself.

That was the proposition. So far from wishing to alter the character or policy of Tracy's, it would be to the interest of Sherlock's to preserve its independence. In London, at any rate, Sherlock's and Tracy's would appeal to different publics. They overlapped, of course, but the results of the overlapping would be for the common benefit. On the other hand, if Mr. Tracy did not see his way to the amalgamation of interests — well, even in the West of England there were pickings for Sherlock's.

George liked the man and recognized the im-

portance of his proposal. The capital suggested would enable him to start building his theater at once — and Pope emphasized the point that he would be left with a free hand in that direction. “We treat you as the Barstow development branch of our business,” he said.

Faced with the necessity for a speedy and vital decision — three weeks was the time agreed upon — George found that the two halves of him had taken sides. On the one side were reason, policy and ambition; on the other nothing but a prejudice. It might be expressed in the boyish axiom: “You get good out of things in proportion as you do not use them for any ulterior purpose.”

He felt as if all his life he had been dodging this crisis. He was up against himself; he had to decide whether to obey reason or instinct. The more he looked into it, the more clearly he saw that the instinct or prejudice, or whatever it might be called, was connected with the deeper unexplained part of his nature; the part that he had never shared with anybody. For that reason nobody could help him. If he talked to Lesbia about his misgivings, he would be talking a language that she did not understand. Whenever he did ask her opinion she said: “I want you to

please yourself," and he knew that she would be absolutely loyal to his choice. Bothered as he was, he recognized the humor, the poetic justice of the situation. He had nobody to confide in but a landscape. He was reduced to the imbecility of saying to the Waterfall: "Well, what do you think about it, Old Growler?" But, now that he had domesticated the inspiration of his boyhood, he could not distinguish whether the Waterfall said "Doom!" or "Boom!"

During the interval the Darraghs came down in fulfilment of an old arrangement with Miles to paint some panels for the living-room. Ironically, the motive of the series was to be the Bourne. George half wished that their visit could have been postponed. He felt that the Darraghs would be on the side of his prejudice, but would be kept from speaking frankly by the implied criticism of the rest of his affairs. In their opinion he was already on the wrong tack. That, so far as Miles was concerned, appeared to be the case; when George talked to him about the proposal he said that he didn't see that it made much difference. George would have a free hand and fuller opportunities, wouldn't he? George felt rather irritably that the point was whether or not he would have

a free soul. Mary refused to be drawn. Ostensibly she agreed with Lesbia that he ought to please himself. The difference was — and it came to him with a shock — that while Lesbia didn't know which was himself, Mary emphatically did. Lesbia spoke in good faith; Mary did not. He felt the lurking humor in her eyes whenever the subject was discussed in her presence. He had never before understood so plainly that Mary and Mary alone had the key to the side door of his nature. He had come to the limit of Miles's understanding of him, but not to the limit of hers.

She was the only person in the world who could tell him what he really wanted. He perceived the irony of the fact that he had never applied to himself the principle that had brought him success in dealing with other people. When he asked himself the reason why he had not, the answer was: "Mary." Before he could be straight with himself he must have it out with her — and all his life he had shirked it.

As the four of them sat in the living-room, after dinner, it came to him suddenly that it was absurd and exasperating that a woman with whom he was not in love should so dominate his thoughts. They had been talking about Sherlock's, and Mary's

attitude, as she lay back in her chair with clasped hands and an ironical light in her eyes, got on his nerves. He contrasted her with Lesbia, so perfectly content to accept his judgment as the best in the world. Kate Flanders had made for Mary a wonderful gown of black and gold, and Lesbia had christened her "The Noble Snake"; and, looking at her now, George said to himself that if he didn't look out she would be a serpent in his Eden. He got up and said brusly:

"Come up into the Orchard, Mary."

Lesbia, who was lying on a couch, heaved a sigh of relief and said: "Yes, take him away, Mary, and talk to him like a mother. Miles and I will be much happier without you."

Mary laughed, and got up slowly. Clanking a little as she moved, she went over and stood by the couch, looking down at Lesbia with an expression that George, in his irritable mood, supposed he ought to call "enigmatic." Then Mary stooped and kissed Lesbia, and with a sudden thrill of excitement he knew that he was going to have it out with Mary at last.

It was May, and the wide entrance was open, letting the light across the flagged Court and up the steps beyond. As they went up them, he ob-

served half consciously that Mary had to adapt her natural movement to the shallowness of the rise. They did not speak until they were past the tennis-courts and under the blossoming apple boughs. Then he said: "What am I to do about this?"

"You know you hate it," she said quietly.

"You said that when I killed my first trout," he said, with a vivid picture of the occasion. "But I went on killing 'em," he added, after a pause.

"Am I to have nothing?" she said.

He was about to say: "What do you want?" but that, in the atmosphere created by her tone, seemed dishonest, and he said rather bitterly: "It seems to me, Mary, that you've got pretty well all that matters."

She laughed and said: "I've got Miles." He was glad to hear her laugh. He knew that everything had to be said now, and it was better that it should be said lightly.

"And I've got Lesbia," he said.

"And there isn't a shadow of regret," she said, as if to close that side of the subject. "Though," she added, "there's just one thing I ought to tell you. Miles knew."

"Knew what?"

"That I waited for you."

The pang he felt was entirely for Lesbia, because he had not been equally honest with her. But how was he to know?

"You do things royally when you begin," he said despairingly.

"So," said Mary, in a matter-of-fact tone, as if she had not heard his last remark, "we have only ourselves to reckon with."

"Let us have it clear," he said. "That day in the train, going down to Holmhurst?"

"I was desperate," she said with a little laugh.

"I can explain all that," he said, as if he were alluding to an old quarrel, "but go on."

"Could there be anything more?" she said in an ironical tone. "Except that I waited to see you with your wife," she added quietly.

It was the reverse of vanity that made him say: "And if?"

"Yes, my friend," she said dryly, "if you had needed me. But I saw that she was dear and good and would make you happy — and the rest you know."

"I'm glad it was Miles," was all he could find to say.

"Now," she said, with a little gasping laugh of relief, as she turned and faced him, "don't you

think I've earned some explanation? There are some things that even the most immodest woman doesn't quite understand."

Until now it had been more easy than he could have believed, but now he hesitated.

"There was a woman," he said like a schoolboy, and feeling that it was not more than a schoolboy confession.

"Did you love her?" she asked quickly.

"No," he said.

"Then I still don't understand," she said mercilessly.

"And they told me that — that you would never marry anybody," he blurted out.

"They?"

"The Raymonds," he said, using the plural to make it clearer.

"Ah!" she said softly. "I thought there was a stupidity somewhere. So it was I who was to blame after all. Forgive me; I *was* immodest. But there were reasons, as you might have guessed. However — be very wise with your son, George."

They moved on under the apple boughs with the long wet grass brushing their feet. He thought of the two in the lighted room behind them without any sense of disloyalty. It was as if he and Mary

were paying a debt long due to them. In a few minutes they had cleared up the problems of nearly half a lifetime. Her husband and his wife would be safer than before. With only mild interest he recognized that the first question he had asked Mary was already answered. It seemed ridiculous that there had ever been such a question. So easy was it, when one paid one's debts.

"But this offer of Sherlock's, you know," he said out of curiosity to know her reason, "why exactly mustn't I?"

"Because you hate it," she said.

"Yes, of course," he said, "but isn't there some notion that it would confirm something that you already consider mistaken?"

"I thought so at first," she admitted, "and so did Miles. But not now. Tracy's is you. The other wouldn't be. I don't pretend to have thought it out; I don't know enough about business. My own idea is that we're coming to the end of business, but while it's here it must be done faithfully. You've taught me that."

It was his own idea of his father and the land over again. She looked a little farther ahead, that was all.

"Anyhow, I can't go back to Tracy's," he said.

"Of course you can't," she said, "you'll go on and on. It may turn to something more definitely public-spirited or it may not. It doesn't seem to me to matter so long as it's you. You might be a dictator or you might be a servant of servants. The one thing that you couldn't be, and remain you, is—what do you call it?—chairman of directors."

It was so amusing to have her putting into words things that had bothered him since childhood, that he would have been glad to let her run on. But she said: "Don't let us waste our time. Let's talk about ourselves."

They had reached the top end of the Orchard and leaned on the low wall, as he and his father had leaned years and years ago.

"The way I work it out," he said, "is that you're the—how shall I put it?—the imperative."

"'Rapturous new name,'" she quoted ironically.

"Well, I'm not a bit in love with you," he said stoutly.

"Oh, I've hated you for years and years," she said.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed, as if she had given him an idea. "I believe there's a lot of hate mixed up with it."

"Never mind what it is, my child," she said, lightly touching his hand as it lay on the wall. "It is; and we've got to put up with it. Tell me about the Servian princess and the Camp and your mother. Most of all about your mother. A woman, even a happy wife, does like to know, you know."

It was easier than he would have supposed even to talk about his mother. He was talking to himself—the self that until now he had kept in a sort of Coventry of woods and waters. She listened, with an occasional question or comment, piecing together what he told her with what she already surprisingly knew. Once he knew that she was crying silently, though when she spoke again it was lightly to say:

"You were a close-fisted little monkey, but after all, she didn't understand you as I did from the very first."

His ideas about the Bourne interested her extremely. When he spoke of the way he had got back on the Waterfall by making it light his home she was a little disturbed.

"I say," she said, "I'm not superstitious, but isn't that rather reckless?"

"He roars as gently as any sucking dove," he said.

"I don't think your Old Growler altogether approves of me," she said, looking in that direction. "Listen to him!"

"There's been a good deal of rain this spring, and the river is very full," he said. "We had a little trouble with the engine last week."

"What if the light went out," said Mary reflectively, "and then he came stalking, stalking."

"Don't be silly," he said, and wished that she would come away. But she went on:

"What's that little pale wood — against the dark one, where the ground rises?"

"The dark one" was the Grove. Somehow he had not been able to tell even Mary about the Grove. But he would take her there. Meanwhile he explained that the "little pale wood" was a scrap of orchard at the edge of Gardiner's field.

"Why did you leave it untouched?" she said interestedly.

"Oh, I don't know," he said like a schoolboy.

Mary laughed and said: "You dear thing, of course you don't. But I do, and if I wanted any proof that you are still you I should point to that.

I shall call it 'Naboth's Orchard.' Miles wants to paint blossom. I shall send him there — he'll love the story. Don't tell me any more — let's go back to them."

There were many things that he wanted to ask her, but he knew that her mood was over. He knew, also, that before they returned he might have taken her in his arms and kissed her. She would have acquiesced, but she would have been a little disappointed at his thinking it necessary.

Easy and natural as the experience had been, he was a little astonished at his own lack of self-consciousness on joining "them" again. From Miles's expression, friendly though grave, George surmised that he knew that something had been said that had to be said. But Lesbia was entirely innocent.

"Thought you'd eloped," she said. "Have you settled the business of the nation?"

"We've settled Sherlock's hash," said George.

"I believe you're right," said Lesbia; and Miles said, "I'm jolly glad."

CHAPTER XXI

AT breakfast they were all unusually gay. It was as if they said with a new meaning, "Come, let us be friends now." So far as George knew, except between him and Mary nothing had been said, but a new affection was in the air. The general tone of their mood was conveyed in Miles's announcement that he was going down to paint pink blossom against falling water.

They all made a great deal of Barbara. It might have been a festival in her honor, and the child was just old enough to feel the attention and to say things that gave pretext for laughter that might otherwise have seemed to betray emotional instability — an April rather than a May mood on the part of three of the people concerned. The child seemed strangely important.

Only Lesbia was quite serene. If she were aware that more than Sherlock's hash had been settled the night before, she was contented with that result. She hated problems of any sort, and

George's recovery from his recent irritation was more than enough to please her loyal heart.

After breakfast Miles set off to paint blossom, and Mary and Barbara accompanied him. They would sit by the Waterfall and play ducks and drakes—"and water-thnakes," as Barbara kept insisting, with a shake of Mary's hand.

George had writing to do. From the window of his room under one of the gables he watched them go up the Orchard, Miles and Mary each holding one of Barbara's hands. The day was blue and windy and the blossom was already adrift. In "Naboth's Orchard," under the lee of Gardiner's field, it would be firmer and pinker—better for Miles's purpose he supposed. He was glad he had kept "Naboth's Orchard"; the panel—for Miles had "seen" in rose and silver just the Bourne subject he wanted to complete the series—would be a permanent record of the clearing up in friendship. Picturing to himself how Miles would do it, George felt that he would be able to read all sorts of things into the panel. The contrast between the frail blossom and the heavy water would suggest the taming of Old Growler. Also the panel would remind him of the duffer who had made him relinquish in childhood the side of

life that Miles and Mary represented. How, when he came to think of it, everything in his life had worked out for the best.

That everything had worked out for the best between him and Mary he had no shadow of doubt. His remark overnight that he was not a bit in love with her had been uttered in all sincerity. Nor did he believe that she was or had been in love with him. The relation between them was not that. It was something beyond love, and it left them both free to love elsewhere. He could not find a word for the relation, but since last night he had found a better name for her than the Imperative. It came out of an article he had read a few days ago in a weekly newspaper.

At one time the North Sea fishermen brought their cod to market in tanks in the holds of their vessels. In the tanks the cod lived at ease, with the result that they came to market slack, flabby and limp. Some genius among fishermen introduced one catfish into each of his tanks and found that his cod came to market firm, brisk and wholesome. The article went on to speak of the world's catfish — anything or anybody that introduced into life the "queer, unpleasant, disturbing touch of the kingdom of Heaven."

Well, thought George amusedly, Mary was his Catfish. She kept his soul alive. While he was writing his letters the word kept coming into his mind, and he said to himself that he must read the article again. He had been working for about an hour when he had the sense of something unusual happening outside. He looked out of the window — a man came running down the Orchard with a bundle in his arms.

George ran down-stairs and out of the house and met the man at the head of the steps. The bundle was Barbara, wet and whimpering, wrapped in a coat.

“The little ’un’s all right, sir,” cried the man, “but Mrs. Darragh — they’re afraid she’s dead.”

George hardly glanced at the child. As he ran up the Orchard his mind was full of dreadful thoughts. There had always been a strangeness in Mary. It was impossible! That horror was mercifully short. At the field he met Andrews. “Where?” he said, and Andrews, turning to run with him, said: “At the mill; they’ve sent for Doctor Burchell, but I’m afraid it’s no use.” The child had fallen in; Mary, calling to Miles, had plunged after her, and Miles had saved the one but lost the other.

They had laid her in that room—now in the possession of decent old couple. When he entered the room they had given her up. Burchell was there, and he said that she must have been dead when they took her out of the water. They left George and Miles alone with her. George noticed for the first time that her hair was a little gray.

In Miles' face, as they clasped hands, he saw grief, pride and a most beautiful compassion. With clairvoyant mind he understood that Miles was sorry for him because it was in saving Barbara that he had lost Mary. It would have seemed natural if Miles had said to him, as he had said to Miles when he got news of his mother's death, "I'm sorry, old chap." But all that Miles said now was: "She should have gone with the stream."

At the moment the words conveyed nothing to him, but afterward, when he talked to Burchell and the miller's man who had run to help Miles, they were made plain. Burdened with the child, she had exhausted herself in breasting the stream. It was natural that she should make this mistake. Below, a high smooth wall on either side made landing impossible, and beyond was the dark bridge. But a few yards farther on the deep swift current slackened and broke against a ridge of stones,

thereafter to flow secretly murmuring through the Grove. With his second plunge, after throwing the child on the spit of land whence she had fallen, Miles had been carried down with Mary under the bridge to an easy landing on the stones. From the room where she now lay the little window spied upon the place where she had come to rest.

Last night he had said to himself that he would take her to the Grove. She had found her way to the Grove alone. What secret the Grove held for him was made clear, and now the Bourne could not hurt him any more.

If — but the “ifs” began with her first narrow glance at him in the nursery. Rahab’s window, the panel which was to record their belated explanation — even her swift homing to him in the train — were but crude comments upon the central infidelity of soul to soul. He had well said that he did not love her. She was love.

Everything that came after was a separate little comment upon the tangle of their lives. Later in the day he was with Lesbia, she thankfully holding the child in her arms. Barbara, unable to take in what had happened, but feeling that she was the heroine, piped her version of the accident. For a

time she and Aunt Mary played together while Uncle Miles painted up in the field. Then Aunt Mary sat down to think. She kept smiling and smiling. George could see her; while he had sat in his room smiling at his notion of her place in his life, she had sat there smiling, at what thoughts he could never know. But he was glad she had smiled at the end. Barbara had called to Aunt Mary once or twice, but Aunt Mary had only said, "Don't go too near the water, my child." Then Barbara had seen a "truly water-thnake"—and George could see the rope of green weed he had so described to the child in jesting memory of his own childhood. Barbara knew she was naughty, and she wouldn't do it again, but she had got a stick and tried to hook out the water-snake. Then she had tumbled in.

Picturing the scene, and imagining what he would have done, George averted his eyes from the child because of a thought he must not harbor. Lesbia put out her hand and said:

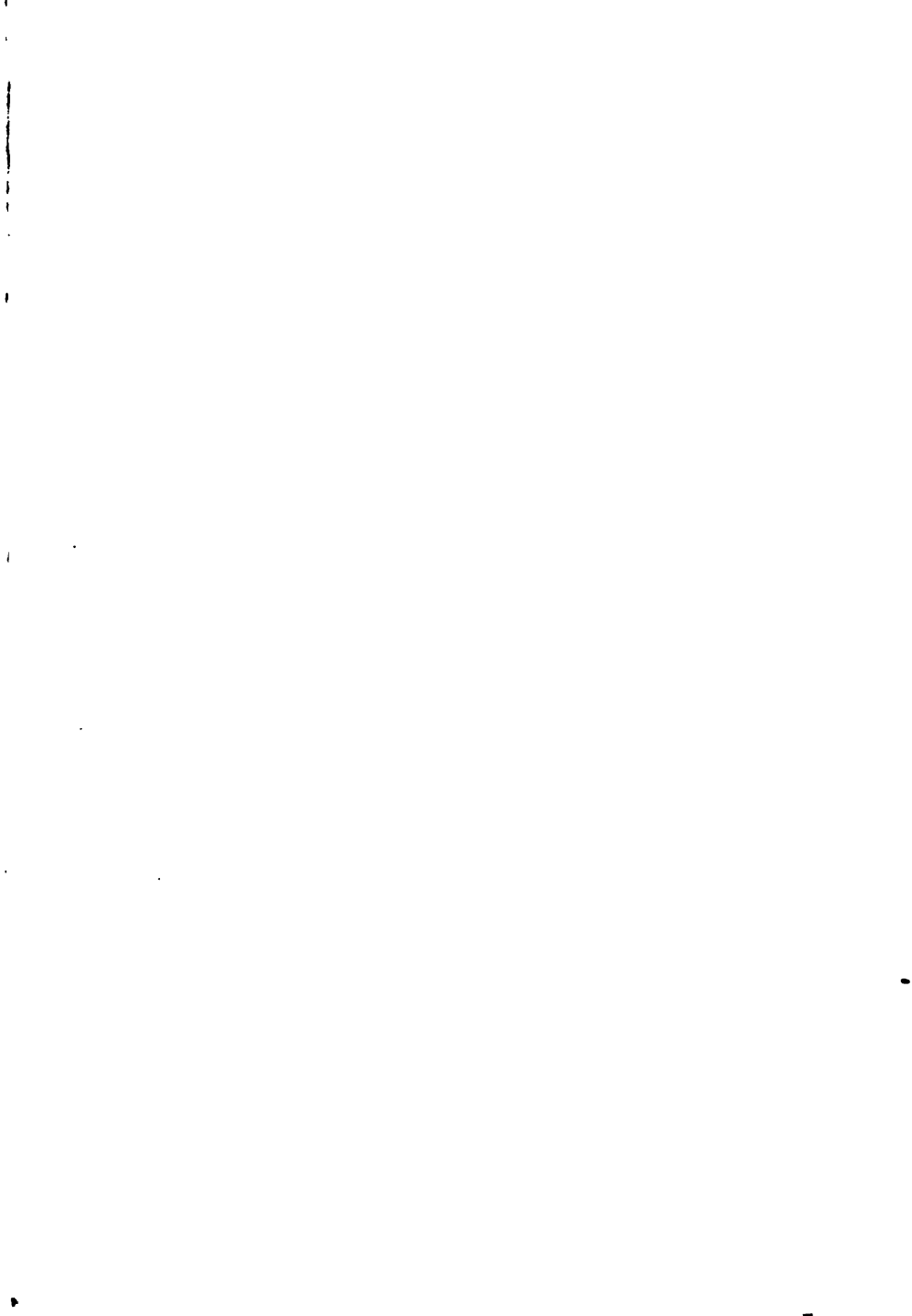
"I know, dear."

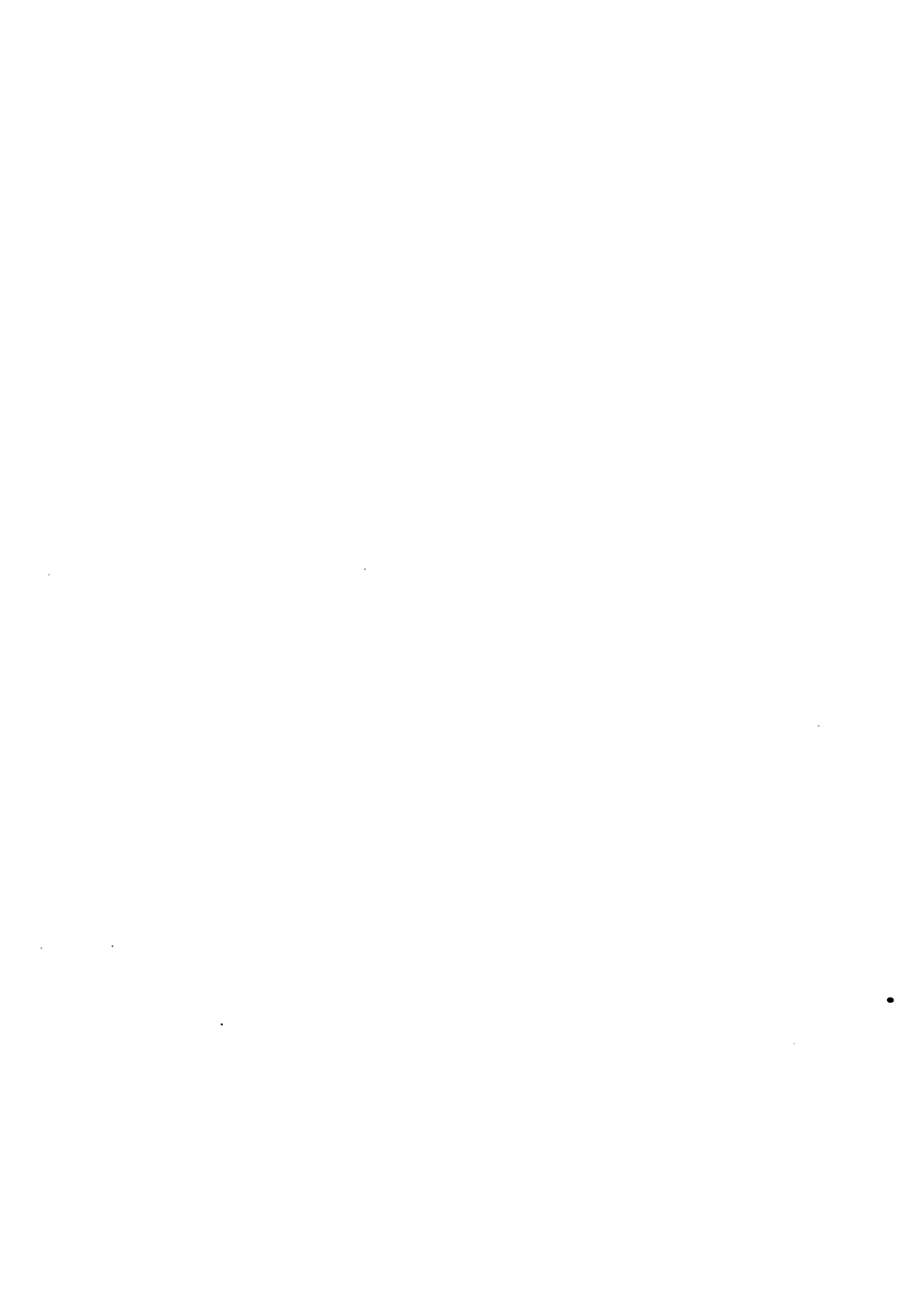
He turned to her with a broken word, and saw in her eyes something that he had never seen there before. To the wisdom of joy that was always

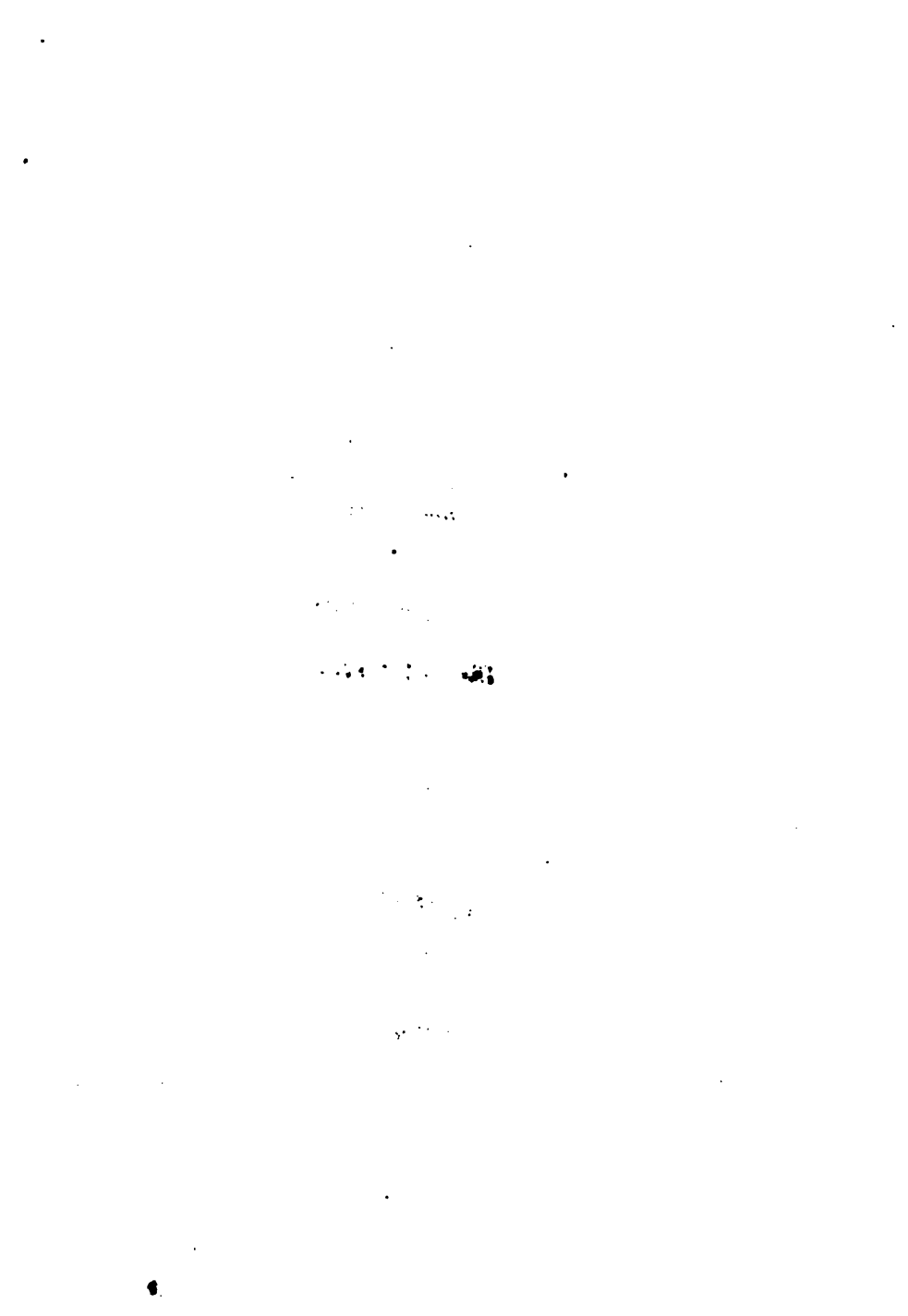
hers was now added that other wisdom of sorrow without which their love had remained imperfect. It was only then he understood that Mary had brought them together.

THE END









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